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METHUEN'S ANNUAL

EDITED BY

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METHUEN'S ANNUAL

J. M. Barrie

OLD HYPHEN

I HAVE been reading a topping book about the Defects of Schoolmasters. As soon as I saw it in a shop out of bounds I knew I should like it, and I carried it back to m' tutor's up my waistcoat. I give readings from it in my room to various persons at a penny each. The readings have to be secret, because if Old Hyphen knew I had the book he would riot with rage. I like to make him riot, but he would also bag it and very likely send me up to the Lower Beak. Now, I have written a thoughtful review of it which I am to send to a newspaper taken in by Hyphen, so if it is printed he is safe to see it.

Some persons think it will be printed and some think not, and they all wish if it is printed that they could be watching Hyphen's face when he reads it. I know exactly what his face will be like and also his hands, of which the remarkable feature is that he cannot look at me without their itching to be at me. I think this is because I have a gift of argument and am rather fat. He says my gift of argument is what makes my nose turn up, but it is really hereditary.

All the persons think I shall be tanned or swiped if the review is printed, and Sibley, who is keeper of the fives and beastly swollen, says perhaps the editor will print it for that reason; and such arguments have given me pause, but I ignore them under four heads—(*a*), (*b*), (*c*), and (*d*).

(*a*) is as follows. Hyphen is not his real name. His real name, which I purposely abstain from giving, is double-barrelled, and that is why we call him Hyphen, and sometimes Little Willy. Therefore unless he prowls about when he should not, he cannot know our name for him, and so he cannot be sure that the reference is to him. He can suspect it, but not prove it; therefore he cannot have me tanned or swiped. Tanning is by the captain of the house, and swiping is by the Head, or the Lower Beak, but it is m' tutor who puts them up to it.

(*b*) is as follows. Even though he feels to a dead cert. that the article is about him, he cannot know who wrote it, as it is to be anonymous. All the persons say I needn't trust to (*b*), because whatever I do Hyphen spots the authorship like a shot, especially if it is of a literary or argumentative character, owing to my style. He then goes for me. This I admit to be so true that I often think I have done things I haven't done. "I suppose this is your doing, Retroussy?" he says (for that is what he calls me, though I think nicknames are bad form), and without thinking, I say "Yes, sir," having got into the way of being the likely criminal. Sometimes it is not till after lights-out that I remember I was innocent.

A case in point that occurs sadly to my recollection was when Pivot mi. prayed for victory in the junior house fives, and won. Nobody thought much of this till he prayed to win the hundred yards, and won again, though Anstruther is better. Anstruther complained to Little Willy, but Willy said that Pivot had done a good thing; and then all sorts of persons, though not naturally pi, began to wonder if it was a good thing; and some of them tried it, and won like anything. Soon m' tutor's was the most religious house in the school among the juniors; and it would have spread to the other houses, but we had the sense to keep it to ourselves. We carried off the junior open fives and the mile, which Turlbuts thought would be a walk-over for them, but they are a very unreligious lot of persons; and Doddridge ma. should have won the long jump for us, but he prayed the day before, and it didn't count.

The queerest thing was when Anstruther challenged Pivot

mi. to run the hundred yards over again for glory; and they both prayed, and the result was a dead heat. Then Pivot made a row and said Anstruther had no right to pray, because he (Pivot) had thought of it first; and a kind of committee of uppers was held to decide between them, and after a lot of jawing, the persons present, being a quorum, passed a law that the fairest way was for no one to pray and any one caught at it henceforth to get a hiding. Hyphen was furious about this when he heard of it, and though of course he could do nothing against the feeling of the house, he said, "I suppose I owe this to you again, Retroussy?" and I sighed, and supposed he did, and got a georgic, though when I finished it I remembered that I had once tried praying also, viz. to be gently sick so as to shirk early chapel.

But to return to our muttons, *i.e.* (*c*). I am not to let on in my review that it is written by a schoolboy, because (1) this would give Hyphen a better handle; (2) I can spread myself better if I pretend I am a *pater familias*; (3) I have a natural gift of writing which editors would not believe emanated from a mere youth; (4) it is well known that editors only print your reviews if you flatter them, and he might not like to be flattered by me if he knew my age. I have tried flattering Little Willy, and it comes to the same thing in the end as arguing with him, viz. Sit down, you little ass. So I have written the review as if I were an old man looking back on his youth.

In conclusion (before coming to the review) we have (*d*), which is very important, and was proposed to me by Middleton, who has never proposed anything good before. His father is a lawyer, and Middleton thinks if Hyphen gets me tanned or swiped an action will lie, owing to the honourable anonymity of the press. I should like this awfully, and I have decided to send the review to the periodical and risk it. If the review is printed I will cut it out and preserve it, and add a note in brackets in ink at the end, stating whether there was any result corporeally. This will be interesting long henceforth to my children's children, and very likely (for I do not under-estimate the peril of my procedure) a damning indictment of Old Hyphen.

1. THE REVIEW[1]

It is sometimes my custom, dear Mr. Editor, when the wife and little ones have gone to bed and the house is once more in solemn silence sunk, to light a Regalia Rothschild and cast my mind back to those days of youth when Plancus was Consul. Gone are my raven locks never to return, and I begin to feel the stairs; but my heart has not lost ye old-time buoyancy, and as I chew the cud of my Regalia, memories of my school-days flock upon me through the rings of smoke. In my hand is an admirable treatise on the Defects of Schoolmasters the views in which chime well with my gentle air of melancholy; and it has suddenly struck me that I might send you a review of this book, if it has not yet been adequately touched upon in your delightful pages. It is by a Mr. Sidgwick, who, I observe in passing, follows the scholastic profession. I know not what whim makes me send the review to you instead of to some other paper, except it be that yours is my favourite journal, the paper-knife being indeed lying beside me while I write, and I am much struck by your able editing.

Mr. Sidgwick says that many men, though they may be admirable scholars, never succeed as teachers. Looking back to my various schools and schoolmasters, how sadly true I find this to be. Our author proceeds to classify the failures with pitiless accuracy. They are "the heavy, slow, unready, ineffective man; the absent-minded, easy-going, slovenly man; the self-indulgent man; and the fool." The list is not long enough, as Mr. Sidgwick knows as well as I do; indeed, further on he recognizes another type of unsuccessful teacher of whom I shall have something to say, viz. one Hyphen.

His classification, nevertheless, contains the portraits of at least half a dozen masters with whom in the long, long ago I came in contact. The least offensive is the "heavy, slow, unready, ineffective man." Such a one was Parker at our

[1] The four papers which follow appeared originally in the *St. James's Gazette*, and have been partly rewritten by the author, who takes this opportunity of thanking the proprietors of the *Evening Standard* for permission to reprint.

Preparatory. Discussing him with Perkins, we used to agree that Parker's faults were bearable. He was without that keen sympathy with others which draws men together; but, if you were quick about it, he at least gave you time to put a stumper to him and then retire without loss of dignity. Hyphen was never like this.

Mr. Sidgwick will, perhaps, allow me to say that even the "absent-minded, easy-going, slovenly man" is not without his redeeming features. As one's hair thins at the top one sees that no man is a perfect monster, any more than that there are women who are perfect angels. For instance, Peterkin in Lower Fourth was absent-minded; but so long as we allowed for this, and even encouraged it, his class was a pleasure compared to Hyphen's. Peterkin was a poet, and the hum of the class-room often put him in the creative mood. Walking up and down with the Delectus in his hand, he would forget where he was and begin trilling over new rhymes to himself. Until he was fairly started we kept up a show of working, and after that we could generally depend on ten minutes or so. He was easy-going, too; and I was the first to discover that nothing flattered him so much as letting him see that you had read his books. I copied verses from them into my Delectus, and he was so pleased when he saw them that after that he looked upon me as a friend rather than as a pupil.

How different with Hyphen! He wrote poetry, or what he called poetry—translations from the classics (he was believed to use a crib); and I thought, soon after I went to his house, to pay him a compliment that any genuine poet would appreciate. So I learned up a long thing about the falling of the leaves in autumn from his last book, and waited my opportunity of spouting it. It came one day in puppy-hole, when Hyphen, in illustration of what we were reading, quoted from the Bard of Avon that line about "autumn laying here and there, A fiery finger on the leaves." I rose and began. I got just as far as the third line, "Green were these leaves in the fresh spring-time," when Hyphen made a brutal rush at me. I have too much respect for myself to go into further details.

To return to Peterkin: Mr. Sidgwick would have been justified in calling him slovenly, for he seldom wore a necktie. You saw this when he flung back his head, and so for a moment raised his beard from his chest. We were always watching for him to do this, and when he did it we cheered, but he didn't know why. It was because there wasn't a necktie.

Our author gives schoolmasters excellent tips or hints. Alas, he cannot but be aware, as I am, that, as a class, advice is the last thing they will take! Thus they must "keep their temper, avoiding alike noisy outbursts of rage, a constantly militant attitude, sarcasm, and querulousness." One feels, after reading this, that Mr. Sidgwick must have known Hyphen personally. It is a withering indictment of him. He constantly lost his temper, giving vent on those occasions to outbursts of rage so noisy that the windows shook. His attitude toward me became militant the moment I tried to get a word in. As for his sarcasm, it was as wanting in delicacy as his querulousness was without dignity. At those times it was useless to reason with him. Mr. Sidgwick will thus see that Hyphen never invited us to "come and explain afterwards"—a thoughtful and creditable suggestion which I should like to see carried generally into effect.

After all, however, our author never puts his fingers so exactly over the average master's weakness as in holding that "with common sense, good temper, industry, and *a desire for self-improvement*, any one can overcome the difficulties of the profession." The italics are our own. Ah, that is the point. They never do have a desire for self-improvement. I am reluctant to say one word against Mr. Sidgwick, with whom I have so much in common; but it is best to tell the truth. I happen to know a person who was at Rugby when our author was a master there, and I have been in communication with him on Mr. Sidgwick's method. He replies that, so far as he can remember, his former master never admitted to them that he had any need for self-improvement. It was the one point that he and the persons differed about most.

I now come to the real secret of how to manage boys. Let us give honour to whom it is due. It was a mother who first

showed me the system in working order. I was residing—more years ago than I care to calculate—one long leave at the abode of my two friends Clarke; and one morning their mother did not come down to dinner. Thinking that she must be suffering from headache, I politely enquired the reason of her absence. It was with a surprise that soon changed into admiration that I learned the cause. She was going without her dinner because Clarke ma. had killed two chickens with his catapult. I discovered that whenever one of her sons misbehaved she punished him through herself. This was to reach his conscience. Thus, when Clarke ma. kicked his minor for bursting a cane-handled lacrosse bat while digging for worms with it, she let him go fishing as usual, detaining herself in captivity instead. At another time it was found that all the dessert fruit had mysteriously disappeared from the side-board, and then she copied out a hundred lines of Virgil, Book II. Her spelling was something priceless, but she did it.

I was very much impressed by this; more so than major and minor, who were used to it; and I departed from the residence of my whilom comrades feeling that if this true lady's plan were adopted in schools, it would vastly increase the morale of those establishments. I said this to old Mr. Clarke, but at greater length and in well-chosen words, expressing the feeling that it should be among women's rights to punish themselves for their offspring. However, he was one of the narrow school and thought nothing of his wife's plan, and cut up rather rough with me about it. But though major and minor kept a cheerful countenance while the punishment was being inflicted, I expect remorse tore at the vitals of their hearts after our return to school, where there is no fishing.

Mrs. Clarke had no doubt of the efficiency of her system, and I wished I could introduce her to Little Willy. Ah, if only schoolmasters had the hearts of mothers! If only they would punish themselves instead of us, how much nicer persons we should be! But Little Willy doing five hundred lines because Anstruther got out of one of the windows, or sending himself up to the Lower Beak as a punishment to Cotton, was never, I knew, to be

witnessed in my time. How true, as you say in your admirable editorial, that crabbed age and youth cannot live together. With these pregnant lines I bring my disjointed review to a reluctant close.

(*Tanned.*)

II. CRIBS AND CRIBS

There has been a lot of bother this half at m' tutor's about using cribs; and though Hyphen is in the minority, he is going on in such a way that some persons are losing heart. The maddening thing is that he won't dry up just for ten minutes; that being about the time in which I could show him where he is wrong. The persons are always at me to get up and put the thing to him. Then they nudge each other. And I prepared a speech, beginning with a few courteous words about his being an intelligent gentleman; but as soon as I began he made such a lunge at me that I at once resumed my seat. If it wasn't that he always insists on doing all the talking himself, he would know that, to a certain extent, his behaviour with regard to cribs has my approval; I taking up a midway position between him and my fellow-residents at his establishment. However, the very sound of my voice seems to make him stamp; though some persons, inclusive of Cotton mi., think that what riles him most is the way I put my legs wide apart just before I begin.

Hyphen was never the kind of preceptor—nor, indeed, have I met any such in my earthly pilgrimage—who trusts to the honour of his pupils. When it is to his own advantage he talks away about honour; for instance, when little Salmon, more familiarly known among his intimates as Kelt, put a metal cracker in his boot and played on it with his toes, Hyphen worked the honour dodge to find out who was doing it. He asked each person, "Is it you?" and so, of course, Kelt had to own up. Kelt deserved a licking, no doubt; but no schoolmaster has any right to take persons at a disadvantage like this. Of course if he catches you at it, you don't blame him for going for you. Hyphen never said a word about honour in the crib business,

though it was a fine chance for him to make a speech, saying that he trusted to the honour of all not to use cribs any more. Then they could have selected a spokesman to reply (and they knew I was ready); and after that he should have scorned to suspect any of us of using cribs, and we wouldn't perhaps have used them so much.

It was Hyphen's suspicious nature that made him say he was sure I used a crib. As is now perhaps generally well known, I have some slight command of language, of which Hyphen is jealous, and he never misses a chance of sneering at it. When we were reading Horace last week, Turley translated *ignis* "devouring element"; and down comes Hyphen upon him like a load of bricks, wanting to know why he didn't say fire, and where he got the word for devouring, and what he meant by putting *ignis* in the dative. There is not a better-intended youth at m' tutor's than Turley, and he was willing to say fire if Little Willy preferred it, and to put it in whatever case he liked; Turley not being the kind to quarrel about a trifle like that. Hyphen, however, quizzed away at him, and said that he could only have got devouring element from one of two sources—namely, either out of a crib or from "*that word-spinning idiot*" (pointing at me). I give his precise words, of which I took no notice, but the italics are our own. Turley, nevertheless, was true blue, though a scug, and did not let on that I had put him up to "devouring element."

Before expressing my views on the subject of cribs, I feel compelled most painfully and reluctantly to recite the following incident to Hyphen's everlasting discredit. It is ever a grief to me to say anything of m' tutor which I cannot couch in terms of commendation. In puppy-hole the desks have holes in them for ink-bottles, but some persons used to make their fingers so inky that Hyphen had the ink-bottles removed, and made us write with pencils. Beneath the desks are narrow shelves; and we found out that if you lay a book open on the shelf, you can read it through the empty holes. Hyphen was so fussy about the way we translated Homer that some persons took to doing it down the hole; that is, if I may so express

myself, they kept cribs on the shelves, and read them by peeping down when Hyphen's attention was otherwise engaged.

This would have answered well for the remainder of the half if Hyphen had trusted to our honour; but, of course, no sooner do we translate better than usual than his unworthy suspicions are aroused, and he goes straight for the ink-bottle holes. He kicked up such a shindy over what we had been doing, not allowing for the possibility of its being the result of too great anxiety on our part to make progress with our studies, that everybody is frightened to do it again.

Last Monday, however, I had a good idea for humiliating Hyphen, and when I was translating I looked pretty often down the hole in front of me. The others wondered what I was up to, and all at once Hyphen pounces on me with a look of triumph adorning his visage. He glanced down the hole, and, seeing an open book, cried, "I warned you what would happen, sir; come into the centre of the room, sir, and be made an example of, sir." With the composure of innocence, I answered that I had been doing nothing; when he broke in again with "You add lies to infamy, sir," and aimed one at my head, which I dodged, Cotton mi. getting it.

Instead of deigning to enter upon a controversy, I pulled the book from beneath the desk and held it up to show every one that it was Kelt's Euclid. Now, the other persons saw how I had done Hyphen; but small as had been my opinion of him for some time, I was not prepared for his most ungentlemanly action. At the least I expected him to drop the subject, while a man of honour would have apologized for his erroneous suspicions. But Hyphen won't take a lesson; so he gripped me by the collar of my jacket and hauled me over the desk, sending me spinning into his ante-room before I could think of anything to say. Of course, when he tackled me about it at the end of the hour, I refused to be drawn into an argument, and I have not spoken to him on the subject since. I have grinned, however.

Cotton says that where Hyphen errs is in not distinguishing between the use and abuse of cribs; and Cotton and Spindles

Welsh have had a fight about which said this first. There is another party, headed by Game, whose uncle is a dramatist, which holds that cribbing is merely plagiarism and therefore legal; but my own view is that there are cribs and cribs. Spindles sneers at this, not understanding that it is an epigram; but to the intelligent reader the signification of the phrase must be full of light and leading. I have heard Spindles, though he denies it, translating one sentence in Cæsar when he thought he was translating another; which shows that the crib he uses is a pernicious one.

But the one I use is not a crib, but merely a translation; and in the preface it says it is only intended to help the student to imbue himself with the spirit of Homer. Such a work is calculated to do the thoughtful student good; but precious little old Hyphen cares for the spirit, if he thinks you are not well up in the moods and tenses and such-like annoying details. I wouldn't mind his stopping the like of Spindles using a crib if he appreciated my reasons for occasionally glancing at one; but Hyphen would no more distinguish between me and Spindles than he will between cribs and cribs. Cotton proposes that we should cauterize Hyphen. He means ostracise; but the word doesn't matter, for Hyphen wouldn't let us.

(*Tanned again.*)

III. TINTINNABULUM DALY

Little Daly only being in the third form, it must be clearly understood that I don't make a friend of him; but he has crossed my line of vision frequently this term owing to a domestic affliction. Nor do I make any apology for sending this communication about him to the printer, as it is always interesting to study the ways of the young.

He was not christened Tintinnabulum. I think he is George, or something hopeless like that; but he could never remember the Latin for anything, and he bought a lot of cards and wrote *Mensa* on one, and tied it to his table, and he tied *Tintinnabulum* to the bell, and so on; his hope being that thus he would gradually

acquire the Latin names for familiar objects. That is why we call him Tintinnabulum, and Tintacks for short.

A long while before he came to me for advice this lad was sentient of coming disaster, and used to wander about glumly, speaking to nobody. This I did not observe at the time, having other things to occupy my attention than the sorrows of youth, which are soon dissipated in a transient ray of sunshine; but I heard of it afterwards. There is nothing I hate more than to swank about myself; believing that, if I am somewhat above the common herd, my writings may safely be left to speak for themselves. For purposes of lucidity, however, I must mention that in the school I have a well-founded reputation for literary expression; so persons often sock me a banana mess to write a letter for them to copy when they have anything particular to say to their parents.

That was what Tintinnabulum came to me to get me to do. The poor little beggar was most respectful, and so I gave his communication more consideration than he could have expected. His people live in India, and they sent him over to England to his Uncle Bob, who promised to have him educated and looked after. Tintinnabulum's Uncle Bob is a widower; and, unfortunately as things have turned out, he became devoted to my young acquaintance, who returned the affection little thinking what it would lead to. For conceive Tintinnabulum's humiliation when he hears that his Uncle Bob is to be married again.

The miserable little scug tried to keep it quiet; but soon it leaked out in the third form, and after that the other little youths nearly frightened Tintinnabulum's life out of him. When he told me what they said, he tried to hang on to my knees, such was his anguish; but, of course, I couldn't stand that. Cosins told him that he would be expected to go on the honeymoon with his uncle, and Tomlinson said as likely as not they would want to call the baby after him. So naturally Tintinnabulum was in a state; he being a manly youth, though a chicken as yet.

Tintinnabulum wanted me to write a letter to his Uncle

Bob saying that he hoped he would be happy and all that, but showing that it was out of the question Daly's going with them on the honeymoon, as there was a rule at m' tutor's against it. Of course I smiled at Tintinnabulum's juvenile ideas on the subject of matrimony, which is an honourable state for those who have the time and the inclination for it; but in undertaking to arrange matters I assumed a serious responsibility; the happiness of several lives being at stake, and Hyphen, as usual, on the watch to spoil everything. I told Tintinnabulum, though, that there was no disgrace in marriage if properly conducted, and also that if they wanted to call the baby after him he would have to stick it.

At the time Daly made his revelations to me I was barely on speaking terms with Hyphen, owing to the way he had been going on. Those readers who have devoured my previous articles will know pretty well by this time the kind of man Hyphen is, always giving way to passion; and they may learn with astonishment that I gave him another chance. Cotton found out that Hyphen was fifty years of age on the 1st of April; so we presented him with an illuminated address printed in three colours by Russell, who has a gift at printing, though he makes an awful mess of his fingers and is good for nothing else. Hyphen's age being fifty, we called it his jubilee year, and flattered him down to the ground, thinking to get a holiday out of him.

Though I say it who should not, it was the noblest peroration I ever composed: calling him a preceptor who ruled by love instead of fear, and saying that it was not his fault the day being April 1st. Hyphen published a book about Cicero this year, which is poorly written, the English being clumsy in the extreme —altogether a slovenly work, which we cannot recommend to our readers; but in the address we puffed it, and said it ought soon to get into a second edition. The address ended with a sentence that should have affected Hyphen, as it pointed out that, in the course of nature, he would soon be taken from us; but we would always keep his memory as a green oasis in our hearts. The whole thing was so complimentary that I departed

from my usual custom when communicating with Hyphen, and put my initials at the end to show him whom he was indebted to for the address. Half an hour after he got it, however, he came banging into puppy-hole, calling out for me; and the scene that ensued was so unworthy a man of his years that I forbear to dwell on it. Suffice it that my relations with Little Willy are now more strained than ever; nor shall I waste paper on him again.

I have described this painful affair because, after Tintinnabulum left me, I concocted a scheme well calculated to help my young acquaintance and at the same time to humiliate Hyphen. Glancing carelessly through my earlier writings, I do not see that I have recorded the fact of the Missus being Hyphen's second wife. I am one of those who look upon second marriages with pain and abhorrence; so it struck me that if I wrote out a letter for Tintinnabulum to copy and send to his Uncle Bob, in which I advised the latter to break off his engagement owing to second marriages being unworthy affairs, I should do Tintinnabulum a good turn and also rile Hyphen, who reads all the thirds' letters if their parents ask him to.

That is just what I did. I didn't mention Hyphen by name; but I referred to him as an aged friend who was so henpecked by his second wife that he took his revenge on a number of young gentlemen at present living with him. Tintinnabulum copied this out, and I made him promise not to tell who had put himself gratuitously to so much trouble to write it. However, all was in vain. Though far from a clever man, Hyphen has the most extraordinary capacity for detecting my hand in any literary undertaking, and he spotted it in Tintinnabulum's letter like a shot. We had another row; but I didn't mind it, for I could see that he felt the allusions by the way he ran at me when I said that I didn't mean the remark about a henpecked friend to refer to him.

Tintinnabulum has recovered his buoyant disposition again, for his Uncle Bob is not to take him with them on the honeymoon; and the youth is grateful to me, thinking my letter did

it. Nevertheless, I know Hyphen too well to believe that he ever sent the letter off.

(*No corporeal notice was taken of this article, Hyphen pretending that he hadn't read it. I would rather be tanned or even swiped.*)

IV.—THE ANSWER IS IN THE NEGATIVE

"Even as it was in the days of Imperial Cæsar when Rome towered proudly on her seven hills, sending forth her cohorts to bend the knee of Cosmos, the while yellow Tiber meandered to hoary Ocean; when Athens, cradle of Miltiades, home of beauty, art, and decay (ah, the pity on't), smiled through centuries of antiquity a smile that never was by sea or shore; so in the whirligig will one generation succeed another."

The above is from the prospectus drawn up by myself and Clarke mi. for laying before Hyphen. It is picked out quite at haphazard, there being several other sentences, in my humble opinion, of greater literary merit. This one, however, explains the grounds on which we proposed to establish a Parliamentary Debating Society; and it is of this society that I purpose, with the gentle reader's kind indulgence, to speak. Any one can draw up a prospectus nowadays; so that I claim no honour for this one. At the same time, Clarke prevaricated when he said we did it between us. As a matter of fact, I wrote the whole thing, and all he did was to sign his name to it. I did not sign it, owing to the strained relations existing at that time between Hyphen and myself. Nevertheless that gentleman—as he may be called—spotted my connection with the affair at once. He did not, however, and neither did the other persons, understand why I wanted a Parliamentary Debating Society, or he would probably have put his foot on it sooner than he did.

My object, here let me say, was not "to make the coming generation worthy to follow in the footsteps of its predecessors"—as stated in the prospectus. It was to give Little Willy and myself a chance of meeting on equal terms. This is what I had been aiming at for five halves, but without effect; for no sooner

did he see himself getting the worst of an argument than he took advantage of his position to shut me up. The other persons wanted us to have the society to ourselves so that they could sit on each others' hats; but I soon got round them. I pointed out that Hyphen would not let lower boys have a society unless he had his finger in it. They got to see this; for no one can be long in our house without discovering that Hyphen is always meddling with you. In the circumstances, I said, the most far-seeing policy was to humour him. They were somewhat surprised at this advice from me, for it was well known that I scorned to humour Hyphen now. He is not easy to humour when he has a spite against you; and although I used to laugh at his feeble jokes in puppy-hole louder than anybody else, it is a curious fact that my laughter always brought him up sharp.

However, they agreed to humour him in this instance, at my instigation; so he was asked if he would consent to be Prime Minister and form a Government. It was put to him as if we did not know enough of parliamentary procedure to get along by ourselves (indeed, Clarke and some of the other persons did not), and he swallowed the bait. Although I was notoriously the most fluent speaker in our form, he did not offer me even a subordinate place in the Government. I did not want it. He was, in fact, playing his cards exactly as I had hoped. I kept out of the business as much as I could; but the moment the arrangements were complete, I let it leak out that I was willing to lead the Opposition. If Hyphen could have withdrawn at the eleventh hour, doubtless he would have done so; but that course was impossible if he wished to conceal that I had frightened him. For those few days before the Society met, his behaviour towards me was distinctly not that of one gentleman to another. I, on the other hand, was scrupulously polite. Nothing he could say or do made me forget that I was a resident in his house; and once, when we met in the street, I bowed to him as well as touched my hat.

The day on which the Society first met was the proudest of my life. In the forenoon Clarke got me by myself and began

to talk in a hesitating twitchy way about the advantages of being in the Government. Clarke had been appointed Secretary for Home Affairs; and I saw by his vague hints and innuendoes that he had something on his mind. I suspected what it was, and was very guarded in my answers, in order to make him speak out. When he heard me agreeing that a Government post had its advantages, he blurted the whole thing out. He had consented to play the part of negotiator between Hyphen and myself, and he had been authorized to say that if I would come over to the other side I should have the War Office. In short, Hyphen was in a funk.

When I had got it all out of Clarke I read him a lesson. I referred to the deserved contempt into which "go-betweens" had fallen at St. Stephen's, and refused to give him my decision. I would, I said, write to Hyphen on the subject. Clarke got into a priceless state at this, and implored me not to mention the matter to Hyphen. The latter, I suspect, had made him promise not to speak of the offer as coming from him.

I was not to be put off in that way though, but went straight, with exultant thoughts inside me, to my room and wrote the following letter:

To the Right Hon. Gentleman the Leader of the House of Commons

Sir,—I am in receipt of your communication per my honourable friend the Right Honourable Gentleman the Secretary of State for Home Affairs, in which you do me the honour of offering me a high post in the Government. I am, however, at a loss to know why you should do this thing. I had thought that my political views were by this time tolerably well known, and that they would have rendered such an offer impossible. I would not for one moment suggest that any unworthy motive has prompted this action; but, in unreservedly declining the offer, I must say, with a full sense of my responsibility, that, however highly I might value the privilege of sitting on the front bench with the right honourable gentleman and his colleagues, I value still more highly the approval of my conscience.

Believe me, dear Sir, etc., etc., etc.

P.S.—You are at liberty to make what use you please of this communication.

Perhaps this was a bit hard on Clarke, but I gave him my white mice for it.

Hyphen ignored this letter, which is his usual style when I write to him; but I put it on his desk, and I have excellent reasons for knowing that he read it.

The Society lasted for exactly six weeks; that is to say, it met six times. From the first it was plain that Hyphen knew he was a beaten man. Mr. Balfour is my favourite statesman, and though I did not slavishly follow his method I made him my model. I was awfully sweet and nippy at the same time. Nobody spoke much except Hyphen and me; but even the other members of the Government allow that I spoke twice as much as he did. My great advantage was that I kept my temper, while he was always losing his. He had to advocate an adjournment over the Derby Day. I expressed my sorrow that the leader of the House should give such public countenance to a national scandal. "Consider the temptation to youth," I said, wagging my finger at my antagonist. "Think of the thousands of happy homes which the vice of gambling plunges yearly into mourning." The point of this was that only a month or two earlier he had caught me and Cotton taking 6 to 1 on a horse, and made a fuss about it.

He used to twist about in his seat when I complimented him (as I often did) on his eloquence, but proved by statistics that he was wrong in his facts. Once I asked if he had ever read a book called Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.* At another time I put his argument aside as "ingenious but far-fetched." When he remained silent I sarcastically twitted him for it, and then admitted that it might be his best policy. Once he got into a regular fume, and evidently forgot that he was not in puppy-hole. When he had finished, I courteously asked the Speaker if the right honourable gentleman had been using parliamentary language. Of course Anstruther was too frightened to reply; but I got him into a corner, and made him say that it was not in accordance with the usages of debate for one member to call another a jackanapes; so that I had Hyphen practically censured in a full house.

My great triumph in this most ripping time, however, was in carrying a vote of censure against the Government. Most of the persons did not understand what they were doing until they had done it ; they being in a constant state of delight mixed with terror all the time I was jawing. They used to time me One of them photographed me jawing, and among the purchasers of a copy was my fag-master, which was very decent of him.

To return to my motion, I carried it, and of course the Government had to resign. That was the fourth night. I led the House for the next two nights, and Hyphen stayed away without pairing. I took care to let him know, though, that I was always asking why my honourable friend was not in his place ; and the upshot was that he stopped the meetings on the ridiculous pretext that they were going to our heads. I think some of the uppers had complained that being M.P.'s made us fag worse than ever, we being big with ill-disguised contempt for the tyrants of a day ; but perhaps what riled old Hyphen most was when once in class he asked me if I was ready to construe, and I replied, without thinking, " The answer, sir, is in the negative." Such is the history of our Debating Society, whose meetings were a bright gleam of light in a life that has not been all sunshine.

(*Swiped.*)

Austin Dobson

ON THE SHELF

(THE BOOK SPEAKS)

" Bouquin de rebut acheté au rabais."
ALFRED DE MUSSET.

I WAS once on the table; I'm now on the shelf.
Let me give a look round, and take stock for myself.

We are not a large party: an ancient *Who's Who*
(Grim sepulchre now of some names that were new!);
Spectator, vol. four, and a *Scot's Magazine*,
With a bulky *Burn's Justice* wedged tightly between;
The excellent Hanway, his *Essay on Tea*;
And *Rhymes for the Roadway*—in other words, ME.

No mortal disturbs our seclusion, save when
Some ruddy-armed handmaid comes now and again
To bang us together, and what is the worst,
Re-shelves us once more, with our titles reversed;
Or the Farmer who owns us, when smoking at night,
Will reach up to tear out a leaf for a light;
Since the ledge that we live on stands over the settle
Where he sits by the fire-log and watches the kettle.

But how I came here I can't possibly think
Except through some tourist who stopped for a drink,
And tested our home-brewed so long on the lawn
That he either forgot me—or left me in pawn.
The former, I hope, for at end there's a scrawl:
" Price fourpence, and bought at a second-hand stall.
Not bad too, as verse—with a lingering note
That gives you a curious lump in the throat."

I was one of three hundred. First twenty went off,
" Complimentary copies," for critics to scoff,
Who were kind, on the whole. Other eighty were sold
(Less so much in the shilling) ; then, shop-worn and old,
We dropped to a drug in the market, 'tis said,
And were promptly " remaindered " at twopence a head.

O impotent close ! But, however you doubt it,
Your twopenny readers are not to be flouted !
For the rich, though they buy, yet they never may need you,
While the poor, when they buy, are quite likely to read you.
And who knows but the laggard who left me behind
May not have been Poet, too, after his kind ?
A mute one, perchance, but still ready to snatch
From my numbers the lilt that he hungered to catch ;
Or to find, in the verses there writ without knowing,
That procreant hint which could set him a-going.
Who shall mete the mysterious impact of souls ?
Was the flambeau of Coleridge not kindled by Bowles ?
I myself may have failed. But then, sooner or later,
I light a new beacon. And what can be greater !

Arnold Bennett

FROM A JOURNAL

CHESS-PLAYER at the Vegetarian Restaurant in St. Martin's Lane :—An old man with white hair and moustache and beard, with a clear, pale, healthy face ; the skin was soft and uncreased, except on the eyelids ; even the inevitable long depressions stretching from either side of the nose to the corners of the mouth were shallow and smooth ; pink, fresh ears. The contour of the eye was that one, beautiful and rarely seen, which, beginning at the outer extremity with a very acute angle, widens in a fine curve till quite near the nose and then rounds suddenly to a meeting-point. The end of the beard stuck forward perkily, possibly from constant under-stroking. The face had a splendid expression of youthful vivacity, alertness ; the eyes were full of light sarcasm and ebullient humour. Over the broad forehead was a silk hat, tipped slantwise ; on the nose, gold-rimmed spectacles ; in the rich, full mouth, a cigarette negligently held. The figure was broad and ample, well and yet carelessly dressed. Over everything an air of prosperous insouciance—as though the constant stream of life and cares and experience had splashed off the man like water off a duck's back. *27th November*, 1896.

An ageing woman grew confidential with me about her husband.

" Yes," she said, " he began to grumble about two o'clock in the morning, in bed. I felt in the humour for letting him have it back again, and I did. I never answered him back for thirty years, but I began then, and I rounded on him. He *was* surprised. Mind you, *I couldn't have done it if it hadn't been dark.*

If I could have seen his face, and he mine, I shouldn't have dared." *13th January*, 1897.

At any cost of ingenuity the townsman will find matter for pride in the circumstances of his town. Biggleswade is too insignificant for the notice of the Great Northern expresses. "They rattle through here," said the landlord proudly, "at seventy miles an hour." *31st July*, 1897.

"Yes," said the landlord of the inn, at the foot of Alconbury Hill—a great, bluff, laughing fellow with only one tooth in his head—"some men, before they wed a woman, think they will want nothing in the world except the woman. Afterwards they find they want everything in the world *except* the woman. . . . Some of 'em find it very queer; they wish they could get back *to where they never started from.*" *1st August*, 1897.

St. James's Hall. A crowded house, mainly filled with hordes of those idle, well-dressed, supercilious, unintelligent women who inhabit the West End and the more expensive suburbs; their hats, though it is autumn, made a garden. Grieg came on in a short jacket of black velvet which serves to decrease still further his short stature. He has a large head with white hair and a bald patch, and the shrewd, wrinkled face of a tinker. A restless man, weary, and yet the victim of an incurable vivacity. The concussion of his hands on the keys of the piano jerked back his head at every loud chord. Between the movements of a sonata he bowed almost imperceptibly, and wiped his face every time with the same mechanical movement. He looked like one who has exhausted the joys of fame and of being adored.

22nd November, 1897.

B. told me that one night in the Irish Sea, when he was on a ship that was expected to founder, he seemed to lose consciousness for a time, and when he came to himself he found himself rolling a cigarette. He also used improper language in speaking to an old lady, though he did not swear at her. He saw a man

running about calling "My wife, my wife!" and literally tearing out handfuls of hair. After a time he regained his self-control. He spoke to another man of the chances of getting safely back to port, and the other man tried to answer, but could not utter a sound. Two school-boys, going home for the holidays, were obviously fear-struck, until some cool fellow approached them and began to talk about school life, cricket-matches, etc., and then in a very short time they were chatting calmly and quietly. *12th January*, 1898.

Mrs. Lewis Lewis (afterwards a witness in the Swami case) wished to prove her curative powers on me, as a journalist capable of spreading her fame. On Wednesday I received a letter from her that she had found my temperament a "responsive" one, and was sure of success. She asked several questions as to my headaches, to which I replied. I was to telegraph to her immediately I felt a headache coming on, and she would at once exert her influence. Distance was no bar. This morning, having a bad headache, I wired her at noon. During the afternoon it disappeared almost entirely. Possibly a coincidence. But I cannot deny that for years my headaches have never lasted less than twenty-four hours; thirty-six would be nearer the average. *25th March*, 1898.

I had an apologetic letter from Mrs. Lewis Lewis saying that she had been from home and had not received my telegram till eleven o'clock last night. *26th March*, 1898.

A man mysteriously asked me to lunch to-day, and it turned out that his object was to impart the news to me that his wife, who is on my staff, was expecting to become a mother and would therefore require leave of absence. He wanted to give me champagne and generally to propitiate me. He seemed to be under the extraordinary apprehension that immediately I got wind of the matter I should dismiss her. When I had explained my attitude he grew easier, very communicative, and told me that his wife could not bring herself to inform me in

person, from reasons of modesty, but that now he had broken the ice she would doubtless talk freely. Of course I accepted this, the regular point of view, assuming that the affair was one to be kept secret as in some strange way indelicate, improper. All the time I was thinking of a passage in Montaigne : " Each one avoideth to see a man borne, but all runne hastily to see him dye. To destroy him we seek a spacious field and a full light ; but to construct him we hide ourselves in some dark corner, and work as close as we may." *6th May*, 1898.

Cedric on the Crusades.

" Now, Cedric, who was it that went about preaching and getting the people to go and fight in Palestine ? "

" Don't know."

" Now, think."

" Can't remember."

" Try . . . Peter . . . Peter what ? "

" Oh ! I know—Peter Robinson." *12th June*, 1898.

Walking to church with the curate for F.'s wedding, I noted one of the curate's remarks. " It is easy to understand," he said, with charming tolerance, " how people have worshipped the sun." *29th June*, 1899.

Apropos of the terrible ideas about sin and God's anger rife in Scotland in former times, it is amusing to note that, in the first edition of Boston's *Fourfold State of Man*, the word " Wrath " occurs so frequently that towards the end the printer, having exhausted his stock of capital W's, has been obliged to employ two V's, thus—" VVrath." *4th November*, 1899.

We went to Brighton by the Pullman. Walking into the town, I was struck by the deferential, fawning, unreliable look of the natives—a cast of countenance peculiar to towns which are devoted to the pleasures of the wealthy.

We had lunch at the Old Ship Hotel, and J. L. Toole was lunching in the same room, apparently in care of a companion. The latter communicated with him by lip signs, without actually

uttering any words. Toole was very enfeebled and weary ; he looked as if he had had a stroke. Three times he raised a glass of weak whisky-and-water half-way to his lips, and put it down again, apparently uncertain of his ability to get it safely to his mouth. He made a pathetic figure, this man whose face must be familiar to hundreds of thousands, and to whom applause was once a nightly affair. He seemed very lonely and forlorn.

As we left the hotel a half-drunk fellow was being refused liquor. He grumbled when told that only travellers were served at that hour. "Strange!" he said. "I've come here for fifteen years, and I'm told that! Where's the old chap? Is he upstairs?"

"There is no one of that name here, sir," said the clerk in charge, without turning a hair.

The man was so completely answered that he went off without a word. *11th December*, 1899.

Willison, the man who combines the functions of village tailor and horse-dealer, and who also buys wholesale my review copies of new novels, told me a story of old Adams, the farming lord of the manor, now over eighty and a "character." It was an early morning dialogue between Adams and an old farm-hand :

Adams. What's this mean, Dick? It's a quarter past six and you but just come!

Dick. Yes, but I was late last night ; it was nigh on eight before I left this yard last night.

Adams. Oh! Ah! But it's a quarter past six, Dick. I won't have this. You can go home, Dick.

Dick (*surprised*). Go home?

Adams. You can go home, Dick. Go to hell, Dick.

Dick (*recovering himself*). If I do go to hell, damned if I don't tell your old father how badly you're farming his land.

14th January, 1901.

Last night I read and re-read a lot of Dr. John Brown's *Horæ Subsecivæ*, and was much impressed by it. The pictures

of Scottish character gave one to see why the Scots prevail everywhere; one also perceived what a number of great men there must be in the world who never achieve wide fame. The "Letter to Dr. Cairns" is one of the best biographical sketches I have ever read; the records in it of real scholarship in humble places are amazing; also humiliating to one who has been forced into the habit of taking seriously the facile reputations of literary London. John Brown himself was a passably big man, but his father, grandfather, great-grandfather, uncle, and great-uncle, were at least as big, if not bigger. He is the best known of all the family, simply through the accident of these essays and sketches, which have become popular; but perhaps he marks the beginning of the decline of a great family. He was a light *littérateur*, an amuser, a diverter. What a difference between his productions and his father's immense and erudite work, *On Civil Obedience*, of which I had never heard before!

18th January, 1901.

Rickards and I, in the evening, went over the vast, unfinished Roman Catholic Cathedral in Victoria Street, and found it distinguished and impressive, a work of great and monumental art—at least I did. Bentley, the architect, was wandering under the dome, examining and enjoying his mighty production, the realisation of a conception which must anyhow live for centuries. It was a sight to see him, a thought to think that one had so seen him, this magnificent artist who had started life as a stone-mason, and is now slowly dying of cancer on the tongue. He wore a frock-coat and a silk-hat, but a necktie of black silk tied in a loose bow. *22nd May*, 1901.

An actress (the original of Cosette in *A Great Man*) told me that, by an order of police, gas was forbidden on the stage in Paris. All lighting must be done by electricity; also that there was a decree against cigarettes and matches in the dressing-rooms. When I told her that I had seen smoking in the dressing-rooms, she said: "Oh yes, of course. Every one does it. But there is an official search of all the dressing-rooms once a month

by the firemen, and before that an attendant always comes round and says to the artistes, ' Kindly hide your matches, etc., as the firemen will be here directly.' " The extraordinary humour of this did not seem to occur to her. " That's very Parisian, that is," I said, and she cynically and bitterly agreed that it was. But she did not see the joke. *21st October*, 1903.

Mdlle C. told me that, between eight and nine years ago only, at Orléans, she had actually seen a little shrunken old lady arrive at the cathedral in a sedan-chair. She was carried up the steps, but dismounted in the portico and entered the cathedral on foot. I also received a circumstantial account of the rehearsal of ballets at the Variétés Theatre ; of the rows thereat, and how the stage-manager would throw up the rehearsal in disgust and retire to his den, and how all the women would follow and kiss him and cajole him to come back again. Then a pause, and the sound of his step descending the stairs, and peace restored. These two things, recounted in the famous but deserted Restaurant Foyot, seemed to go together.

6th November, 1903.

John Galsworthy

FAIRYLAND

IT was about three o'clock, this November afternoon, when I rode down into "Fairyland," as it is called about here. The birch-trees there are more beautiful than any in the world; and when the clouds are streaming over in rain-grey, and the sky soaring above in higher blue, just-seen, those gold and silver creatures have such magical loveliness as makes the hearts of mortals ache. The fairies, who have been driven off the moor, alone watch them with equanimity, if they be not indeed the birch-trees themselves—especially those little very golden ones that have strayed out into the heather, on the far side of the glen. "Revenge!" the fairies cried when a century ago those, whom they do not exist just to amuse, made the new road over the moor, cutting right through the home of twilight, that wood above the "Falls," where till then they had always enjoyed inviolable enchantment. They trooped forthwith in their multitudinous secrecy down into the glen, to swarm about the old road. In half a century or so they had it almost abandoned, save for occasional horsemen and harmless persons seeking beauty, for whom the fairies have never had much feeling of aversion. And now, after a hundred years, it is all theirs; the ground so goldened with leaves and bracken that the old track is nothing but a vague hardness beneath a horse's feet, nothing but a runnel for the rains to gather in. There is everywhere that glen scent of mouldering leaves, so sweet when the wind comes down and stirs it, and the sun frees and livens it. Not very many birds harbour here, perhaps because hawks are fond of hovering there. This was once the only road up to the village, the only communication with all that lies to the south and east! Now the fairies have got it indeed; they have witched to

skeletons all the little bridges across the glen stream; they have mossed and thinned the gates to wraiths. With their dapple-gold revelry in sunlight, and their dance of pied beauty under the moon, they have made all their own.

I have ridden many times down into this glen; and slowly up among the beeches and oaks into the lanes again, hoping and believing that, some day, I should see a fairy take shape to my thick mortal vision; and to-day, at last, verily I have seen.

I heard it first about half-way up the wood, a silvery voice piping out very true what seemed like mortal words, not quite to be caught. Resolved not to miss it this time, I got off quietly and tied my mare to a tree. Then, tiptoeing in the damp leaves that did not rustle, I stole up till I caught sight of it, from behind an oak.

It was sitting in yellow bracken as high as its head, under a birch-tree that had a few branches still gold-feathered. It seemed to be clothed in blue, and to be swaying as it sang. There was something in its arms, as it might be a creature being nursed. Cautiously I slipped from that tree to the next, till I could see its face, just like a child's, fascinating, very, very delicate, the little open mouth poised and shaped ever so neatly to the words it was singing; the eyes wide apart and ever so wide open, fixed on nothing mortal. The song, and the little body, and the spirit in the eyes, all seemed to sway—sway together, like a soft wind that goes sough-sough, swinging, in the tops of the ferns. And now it stretched out one arm, and now the other, beckoning in to it those to which it was singing; so that one seemed to feel the invisible ones stealing up closer and closer.

These were the words that came so silvery and slow through that little mouth: "Chil—dren, chil—dren! Hussh!"

It seemed as if the very rabbits must come and sit up there, the jays and pigeons settle above; everything in all the wood gather. Even one's own heart seemed to be drawn in by those beckoning arms, the slow enchantment of that tinkling voice, the look in those eyes, that, lost in the unknown, were seeing no mortal glen, but only that mazed wood, where friendly

wild things come, who have no sound to their padding, no whirr to the movement of their wings; whose gay whisperings have no noise, whose eager shapes no colour; the fairy dream-wood of the unimaginable.

"Chil—dren, chil—dren! Hus-s-h!"

For just a moment I could see that spirit company, ghosts of the ferns and leaves, of butterflies and bees and birds, and four-footed things innumerable, ghosts of the wind, the sunbeams, and the raindrops, and tiny flickering ghosts of moon-rays. For just a moment I saw what the fairy's eyes were seeing, without knowing what they saw.

And then my mare trod on a dead branch, and all vanished. My fairy was gone; and there was only little "Connemara," as we call her, smiling up at me from the fern, where she had come to practise her new school-song.

P. R. Chalmers

TWO POEMS

I. HAY HARVEST

I MET a man mowing
A meadow of hay;
So smoothly and flowing
His swathes fell away,
At break o' the day
Up Hambleden way;
A yellow-eyed collie
Was guarding his coat—
Loose-limbed and lob-lolly,
But wise and remote.

The morning came leaping,—
'Twas four o' the clock,
The world was still sleeping
At Hambleden Lock,—
As sound as a rock
Slept village and Lock;
The mower said, "Early
To see you about?"
Said I, "I'm for Hurley
To try for a trout!"

And lovely and quiet,
And lonely and chill,
Lay river and eyot,
And meadow and mill;—
I think of them still,—
Mead, river, and mill,—

For wasn't it jolly
With only us three,—
The yellow-eyed collie,
The mower and me?

II. THE VISITOR

The white goat Amaryllis,
She wandered at her will
At time of daffodillies
Afar and up the hill:
We hunted and we holloa'd
And back she came at dawn,
But what d'you think had followed?—
A little, pagan Faun!

His face was like a berry,
His ears were high and pricked:
Tip-tap—his hoofs came merry
As up the path he clicked;
A junket for his winning
We set in dairy delf;
He eat it—peart and grinning
As Christian as yourself!

He stayed about the steading
A fortnight, say, or more;
A blanket for his bedding
We spread beside the door;
And when the cocks crowed clearly
Before the dawn was ripe,
He'd call the milkmaids cheerly
Upon a reedy pipe!

That fortnight of his staying
The work went smooth as silk:
The hens were all in laying,
The cows were all in milk;

And then—and then one morning
The maids woke up at day
Without his oaten warning,—
And found he'd gone away.

He left no trace behind him ;
But still the milkmaids deem
That they, perhaps, may find him
With butter and with cream :
Beside the door they set them
In bowl and golden pat,
But no one comes to get them—
Unless, maybe, the cat.

The white goat Amaryllis,
She wanders at her will
At time of daffodillies,
Away up Woolcombe hill ;
She stays until the morrow,
Then back she comes at dawn;
But never—to our sorrow—
The little, pagan Faun.

"Saki"

THE EAST WING

A Tragedy in the Manner of the Discursive Dramatists

IT was early February and the hour was somewhere about two in the morning. Most of the house-party had retired to bed. Lucien Wattleskeat had merely retired to his bedroom, where he sat over the still vigorous old-age of a fire, balancing the entries in his bridge-book. They worked out at seventy-eight shillings on the right side, as the result of two evenings' play, which was not so bad, considering that the stakes had been regrettably low.

Lucien was a young man who regarded himself with an undemonstrative esteem, which the undiscerning were apt to mistake for indifference. Several women of his acquaintance were on the look-out for nice girls for him to marry, a vigil in which he took no share.

The atmosphere of the room was subtly tinged with an essence of tuberose, and more strongly impregnated with the odour of wood-fire smoke. Lucien noticed this latter circumstance as he finished his bridge-audit, and also noticed that the fire in the grate was not a wood one, neither was it smoking.

A stronger smell of smoke blew into the room a moment later as the door opened, and Major Boventry, pyjama-clad and solemnly excited, stood in the doorway.

"The house is on fire!" he exclaimed.

"Oh," said Lucien, "is that it? I thought perhaps you had come to talk to me. If you would shut the door the smoke wouldn't pour in so."

"We ought to do something," said the Major with conviction.

"I hardly know the family," said Lucien, "but I suppose one will be expected to be present, even though the fire does not appear to be in this wing of the house."

"It may spread to here," said the Major.

"Well, let's go and look at it," assented Lucien, "though it's against my principles to meet trouble half-way."

"Grasp your nettle, that's what I say," observed Boventry.

"In this case, Major, it's not our nettle," retorted Lucien, carefully shutting the bedroom door behind him.

In the passage they encountered Canon Clore, arrayed in a dressing-gown of Albanian embroidery, which might have escaped remark in a *Te Deum* service in the Cathedral of the Assumption at Moscow, but which looked out of place in the corridor of an English country house. But then, as Lucien observed to himself, at a fire one can wear anything.

"The house is on fire," said the Canon, with the air of one who lends dignity to a fact by according it gracious recognition.

"It's in the east wing, I think," said the Major.

"I suppose it is another case of suffragette militancy," said the Canon. "I am in favour of women having the vote myself, even if, as some theologians assert, they have no souls. That, indeed, would furnish an additional argument for including them in the electorate, so that all sections of the community, the soulless and the souled, might be represented, and, being in favour of the female vote, I am naturally in favour of militant means to achieve it. Belonging as I do to a Church Militant, I should be inconsistent if I professed to stand aghast at militant methods in vote-winning warfare. But, at the same time, I cannot resist pointing out that the women who are using violent means to wring the vote-right from a reluctant legislature are destroying the value of the very thing for which they are struggling. A vote is of no conceivable consequence to anybody unless it carries with it the implicit understanding that majority-rule is the settled order of the day, and the militants are actively engaged in demonstrating that any minority armed with a box of matches and a total disregard of consequences can force its opinions and its wishes on an indifferent or hostile com-

munity. It is not merely manor-houses they are destroying, but the whole fabric of government by ballot-box."

"Oughtn't we to be doing something about the fire?" said Major Boventry.

"I was going to suggest something of the sort myself," said the Canon stiffly.

"To-morrow may be too late, as the advertisements in the newspapers say," observed Lucien.

In the hall they met their hostess, Mrs. Gramplain.

"I'm so glad you have come," she said; "servants are so little help in an emergency of this kind. My husband has gone off in the car to summon the fire-brigade."

"Haven't you telephoned to them?" asked the Major.

"The telephone unfortunately is in the east wing," said the hostess; "so is the telephone-book. Both are being devoured by the flames at this moment. It makes one feel dreadfully isolated. Now if the fire had only broken out in the west wing instead, we could have used the telephone and had the fire-engines here by now."

"On the other hand," objected Lucien, "Canon Clore and Major Boventry and myself would probably have met with the fate that has overtaken the telephone-book. I think I prefer the present arrangement."

"The butler and most of the other servants are in the dining-room, trying to save the Raeburns and the alleged Van Dyke," continued Mrs. Gramplain, "and in that little room on the first landing, cut off from us by the cruel flames, is my poor darling Eva—Eva of the golden hair. Will none of you save her?"

"Who is Eva of the golden hair?" asked Lucien.

"My daughter," said Mrs. Gramplain.

"I didn't know you had a daughter," said Lucien, "and really I don't think I can risk my life to save some one I've never met or even heard about. You see, my life is not only wonderful and beautiful to myself, but if my life goes, nothing else really matters—to me. I don't suppose you can realise that, to me, the whole world as it exists to-day, the Ulster problem,

the Albanian tangle, the Kikuyu controversy, the wide field of social reform and Antarctic exploration, the realms of finance, and research and international armaments, all this varied and crowded and complex world, all comes to a compiete and absolute end the moment my life is finished. Eva might be snatched from the flames and live to be the grandmother of brilliant and charming men and women; but, as far as I should be concerned, she and they would no more exist than a vanished puff of cigarette smoke or a dissolved soda-water bubble. And if, in losing my life, I am to lose her life and theirs, as far as I personally am concerned with them, why on earth should I, personally, risk my life to save hers and theirs?"

"Major Boventry," exclaimed Mrs. Gramplain, "you are not clever, but you are a man with honest human feelings. I have only known you for a few hours, but I am sure you are the man I take you for. You will not let my Eva perish."

"Lady," said the Major stumblingly, "I would gladly give my life to rescue your Eva, or anybody's Eva for the matter of that, but my life is not mine to give. I am engaged to the sweetest little woman in the world. I am everything to her. What would my poor little Mildred say if they brought her news that I had cast away my life in an endeavour, perhaps fruitless, to save some unknown girl in a burning country house?"

"You are like all the rest of them," said Mrs. Gramplain bitterly; "I thought that you, at least, were stupid. It shows how rash it is to judge a man by his bridge-play. It has been like this all my life," she continued in dull, level tones; "I was married, when little more than a child, to my husband, and there has never been any real bond of affection between us. We have been polite and considerate to one another, nothing more. I sometimes think that if we had had a child things might have been different."

"But—your daughter Eva?" queried the Canon, and the two other men echoed his question.

"I have never had a daughter," said the woman quietly, yet, amid the roar and crackle of the flames, her voice carried, so that not a syllable was lost. "Eva is the outcome of my

imagination. I so much wanted a little girl, and at last I came to believe that she really existed. She grew up, year by year, in my mind, and when she was eighteen I painted her portrait, a beautiful young girl with masses of golden hair. Since that moment the portrait has been Eva. I have altered it a little with the changing years—she is twenty-one now—and I have repainted her dress with every incoming fashion. On her last birthday I painted her a pair of beautiful diamond earrings. Every day I have sat with her for an hour or so, telling her my thoughts, or reading to her. And now she is there, alone with the flames and the smoke, unable to stir, waiting for the deliverance that does not come."

"It is beautiful," said Lucien; "it is the most beautiful thing I ever heard."

"Where are you going?" asked his hostess, as the young man moved towards the blazing staircase of the east wing.

"I am going to try and save her," he answered; "as she has never existed, my death cannot compromise her future existence. I shall go into nothingness, and she, as far as I am concerned, will go into nothingness too; but then she has never been anything else."

"But your life, your beautiful life?"

"Death in this case is more beautiful."

The Major started forward.

"I am going too," he said simply.

"To save Eva?" cried the woman.

"Yes," he said; "my little Mildred will not grudge me to a woman who has never existed."

"How well he reads our sex," murmured Mrs. Gramplain, "and yet how badly he plays bridge!"

The two men went side by side up the blazing staircase, the slender young figure in the well-fitting dinner-jacket and the thick-set military man in striped pyjamas of an obvious Swan & Edgar pattern. Down in the hall below them stood the woman in her pale wrapper, and the Canon in his wonderful-hued Albanian-work dressing-gown, looking like the arch-priests of some strange religion presiding at a human sacrifice.

As the rescue-party disappeared into the roaring cavern of smoke and flames, the butler came into the hall, bearing with him one of the Raeburns.

"I think I hear the clanging of the fire-engines, ma'am," he announced.

Mrs. Gramplain continued staring at the spot where the two men had disappeared.

"How stupid of me!" she said presently to the Canon. "I've just remembered I sent Eva to Exeter to be cleaned. Those two men have lost their lives for nothing."

"They have certainly lost their lives," said the Canon.

"The irony of it all," said Mrs. Gramplain, "the tragic irony of it all!"

"The real irony of the affair lies in the fact that it will be instrumental in working a social revolution of the utmost magnitude," said the Canon. "When it becomes known, through the length and breadth of the land, that an army officer and a young ornament of the social world have lost their lives in a country-house fire, started by suffragette incendiarism, the conscience of the country will be aroused, and people will cry out that the price is too heavy to pay. The militants will be in worse odour than ever, but, like the Importunate Widow, they will get their way. Over the charred bodies of Major Boventry and Lucien Wattleskeat the banners of progress and enfranchisement will be carried forward to victory, and the mothers of the nation will henceforth take their part in electing the Mother of Parliaments. England will range herself with Finland and other enlightened countries which have already admitted women to the labours, honours, and responsibilities of the polling-booth. In the early hours of this February morning a candle has been lighted——"

"The fire was caused by an over-heated flue, and not by suffragettes, sir," interposed the butler.

At that moment a scurry of hoofs and a clanging of bells, together with the hoot of a motor-horn, were heard above the roaring of the flames.

"The fire-brigade!" exclaimed the Canon.

"The fire-brigade and my husband," said Mrs. Gramplain, in her dull level voice; "it will all begin over again now, the old life, the old unsatisfying weariness, the old monotony; nothing will be changed."

"Except the east wing," said the Canon gently.

Robert Browning

I. A CASTIGATION

MRS. BROWNING died on June 29, 1861. Not long after, an officious and hasty literary man, having obtained possession of some of her correspondence, made that acquisition the excuse for conceiving that the time was ripe for a biography of her; and, wholly failing to appreciate her husband's character or position as widower, applied to him for other documents, together with whatever information he could supply. Browning, who was naturally incensed, seems to have expressed himself very freely; and then, with the assistance of Mr. George Smith, the stranger's activities were suppressed and an undertaking extorted that he would not resume them. It was on the receipt of this undertaking that Browning wrote the letter which follows. The name of his correspondent I have not ascertained, but it is well that he existed in all his mistaken zeal since thereby he has enriched the literature of remonstrance and chastisement with one of its finest examples.

This second letter which Browning wrote to him—and possibly, after all, did not send; for it is odd (unless it is a first draft or copy) that it should have been included in the sale of the two poets' correspondence in 1913—stands alone in its dignity and poignancy as a rebuke to tactlessness and biographical *trop de zèle.*

Before printing it here, it should be said that some light upon it is thrown by a letter written by the poet to his friend, Isa Blagden, two days earlier, on January 19, 1863, included in Mrs. Sutherland Orr's *Life and Letters of Robert Browning.* I quote a passage. The names are suppressed there, as here:

". . . Ever since I set foot in England I have been pestered with applications for leave to write the Life of my wife—I have refused—and there an end. I have last week received two communications from friends, enclosing the letters of a certain . . . of . . . , asking them for details of life and letters, for a biography he is engaged in—adding, that he 'has secured the correspondence with her old friend . . . .' Think of this beast working away at this, not deeming

my feelings or those of her family worthy of notice—and meaning to print letters written years and years ago, on the most intimate and personal subjects, to an 'old friend'—which, at the poor . . . [her friend]'s death fell into the hands of a complete stranger, who at once wanted to print them, but desisted through Ba's earnest expostulation enforced by my own threat to take law proceedings—as fortunately letters are copyright. I find this woman died last year, and her son writes to me this morning that [name omitted] got them from him as autographs merely—he will try and get them back. [Name omitted], evidently a blackguard, got my letter, which gave him his deserts, on Saturday—no answer yet; if none comes, I shall be forced to advertise in *The Times*, and obtain an injunction. But what I suffer in feeling the hands of these blackguards (for I forgot to say another man has been making similar applications to friends), what I undergo with their paws in my very bowels, you can guess, and God knows!"

This tells us that Browning had written a previous letter a few days before. To that the answer evidently came on the 21st, two days after the letter to Miss Blagden. The poet then wrote the final remonstrance which follows, and possibly, having written it and eased his mind, either set it (as one may not unnaturally think) aside and wrote another less emphatic, or made this copy.

Here is the letter to speak for itself, printed now for the first time by kind permission of Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co., the owners of the copyright, and Mr. Francis Edwards, the owner of the original:

19 Warwick Crescent, Harrow Road,
January 21, 1863.

Sir,

I have before me your letter with its promise of desisting from a procedure which would have caused me and others the deepest pain. In the face of this, which I am glad to declare a full and frank reparation of your mistake, I feel too much relief not to be desirous that, as my own annoyance is put a stop to, your own feelings should be spared as much as possible. I will cheerfully believe therefore—as your conduct really entitles you to expect—that you acted in ignorance of what the world thinks—and certainly all those whom you ought to respect, think—on the subject of a stranger's undertaking to write the Life of a person but recently removed from the earth, and soliciting

details, and correspondence illustrative of it, from friends, without the direct permission of that other person whom the Law of God and Man accurately regards as *one* with the former. I have had several applications made to me by individuals, of more or less ability, to permit them, in the event of my declining such a work, to attempt it; I refused this permission, with the courtesy which [you] yourself would assuredly have experienced had you not omitted this indispensable preliminary. Of course, I could not be aware of the various good intentions which you protest until you directed yourself to me—which, you will admit, was not the case till the letters of which you complain had reached you. And you will also admit that it was unfortunate, since you were persuaded of the "purity of your motives," and unaware that your undertaking would be offensive to me, or any near relative, that your first request for materials should not have been made to *us*: did you actually suppose that *we* have less materials than the friends to whom you had recourse?

As for the "warmth of my expressions"—I shall only say that it is satisfactory to me to hope, from the wonder you express at them, that [you] yourself have never yet lost a near and dear relative: it cannot indeed be otherwise. Here are you, whose letters denote no incompetent nor uncultivated individual, —whose professions of literary taste and preference have my complete acquiescence,—here are you, a stranger, getting all the details concerning—and inspecting and exercising your judgment upon the intimate correspondence of—one whose very name I am unable to pronounce with firmness before the nearest in blood to me—my Father or my son: what imaginable right had you to do this? "Admiration for a poet" you plead —but where is the reverence which should accompany this? and what qualification for a biographer is such utter ignorance of the soul of his subject as is implied by your disregard of one of the most obvious traits in its character? Observe, I am still in the dark as to whether you have, or have not, obtained other letters than those which you "prematurely spoke of as being secured"; but take those only—they were obtained by

the chance of an old, blind, forsaken man dying and leaving his papers at the mercy of the first comer : it would have broken his good, tender heart to let communications meant for his single ear be hawked about the world in order to distress his friend's family and so repay her confidence. Do you think if that friend had possessed the privilege, denied by distance, of attending that death-bed, and, in consequence, had become the owner of a series of letters, say, addressed to him by Dr. Clarke,—that these would have been caught up, studied, dealt with as the absolute property of the finder, and finally placed in the power of a stranger to use, take or leave, publish or be silent about, at his complete discretion ? The letters are the present holder's, just as a purse picked up or a parcel misdirected might be.

But I shall say no more—nor should I have said so much but from a sincere wish to turn any pain I may have caused you to real good : I fancy you are young, and in a proper exercise of your faculty you may achieve distinction : be assured that all such interferences with the sacredness of the grave are abominable. You venerate Tennyson, according to the application which occasioned my hard words : read and lay to heart his admirable verses to the *Author of a Life and Letters*, far less objectionable in its nature than yours :—first remark what language *he* uses to such an one, and then consider what would have been its intensity had the delinquent's victim, instead of the poet's predecessor, happened to be his wife.

I shall believe your word and take no further step in the matter. I have written to Mr. Smith, and, from the tone and character of his reply, earnestly trust that I may recover what should never have been alienated from me.

I am, sir,

Your obedient humble servant,
ROBERT BROWNING

II. A SCULPTOR'S JEST

Thomas Woolner, the sculptor, and the poet of *My Beautiful Lady* (which appeared in *The Germ* in 1850), was born in 1826 and died in 1893.

He was closely associated both with the great poets and great painters of the middle of the last century. His departure for Australia, in 1852, gave Madox Brown the suggestion for his picture "The Last of England," and Woolner not only made a bust of Tennyson, but supplied him with the plots of "Enoch Arden" and "Aylmer's Field." The following letter from Woolner to Browning is an agreeable reminder that the author of *Sordello* liked a joke too:

To Robert Browning

29 Welbeck Street, W
January 9, 1866.

My dear Browning,

Of course you are sorry to see that it has got about; but he affair is valuable as showing the extraordinary force of a poet's imagination:

> Marylebone.—An eccentric man named Robert Browning was charged with disorderly conduct. The officer said he saw him on the previous night surrounded by a number of people. He was on his knees howling like a dog, and scratching at the ground with his hands. He asked him to get up and go away. He refused to do so, when he was asked what he meant by such conduct, and his reply was that he was making the underground railway to Hammersmith, and had got to get it finished by morning. He was then locked up.
>
> *Times*, January 8th, 1866.

It seemed to me that it ought to be stuck under that likeness of yours I sent some time back at the request of A. T.[ennyson], but of course you are best judge as to whether you like the connection.

What a thing it is, you see, to have friends who look after your interests—you might have forgot, and missed this characteristic freak altogether!

Yours ever,

Thos. Woolner

Bowyer Nichols

EPIGRAMS

CYNICISM

OH, Cynicism, let them bleat and sigh,
Their own hearts hard, belike, and chill as stone;
Give me the soul that's tinged with irony,
For then I know that it has felt and known.

THE PHILOSOPHIC SHEPHERD

I never have been rich, and now am poor;
Never in love, and still am fancy-free:
I court no fortune, covet no amour;
Together grant them, gods, or let me be!

THE RETURN OF LA GIOCONDA

Two years in that blind coffer of the thief,
A little weary, did thine eyelids close,
Thy changing lineaments accept eclipse?
Dead many times, 'twas not so long a while;
But now, new-risen for a world's relief,
Madonna Lisa, please take up the pose
Among the younger rocks, nor let thy lips
Defer the public function of their smile!

THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY

Some pallid Greek medallion, frayed with time,
Might match the wasted beauty of this face
Whose frail, strange youth forestalls at morning prime
Twilight's refinements, age's tragic grace.

ALLEVIATION

Were you but with me, dear,
  This blind, deaf, voiceless grief
The hour that you were here
  Might find an hour's relief.

You could not sympathize,
  You would not understand,
But smile with gentle eyes,
  And touch with tranquil hand.

Awhile the sense of pain
  Drowsed by that tender spell,
Till you were lost again
  I should be whole and well.

ON CRYING FOR THE MOON

Time was he watched, poor soul, and wept in vain;
  Now time hath turned that vigilance to sleep;
She knew no pity, for she felt no pain,
  Nor feels he, though she watch, poor soul, and weep.

The Moon we cry for, which once rose for him
  An orb of flame, superbly upward drawn,
For her sinks half-deplenished, pale and dim,
  A desperate wraith that withers in the dawn.

Well—and could mingled tears, or late or soon,
  Could hands stretched in communion of desire
Ever estrange from heaven the sacred Moon
  Or light one hearth with high-sequestered fire?

THE MOURNER

I met the mother of my friend who died,
  And kind and tender were the words she said;
But this was what her poor eyes could not hide:
  What right have you to live, and he be dead?

Anon

B. OR *D.*

BY AN INJURED CELEBRITY

I AM not really famous, although famous enough to have crept into a calendar. But, by the perversity of chance, there is a most grievous error in the modest line which is there given to me. The compositor was, I suppose, in a hurry, the "pi" had been carelessly assembled, or the proof-reader nodded. Whatever the cause, the result is that, instead of saying—

So-and-so, *b.* 1873,

the calendar's announcement against my birthday is—

So-and-so, *d.* 1873.

Just that little difference between two letters, and forty-one years of life swept away!

I blame no one, least of all the compositor, for the tortuosity of my own handwriting long since ranged me on his side. Moreover, compositors are entitled to their blunders, as we to ours. They are defects of qualities. The compositor is a remarkable creature, quite apart from his ability to read my handwriting. He performs, with more or less cheerfulness, tasks—the very thought of which terrifies me—under exceedingly unsavoury conditions. He lives in a beastly atmosphere of printer's ink, amid the clatter of machinery, with artificial light. His fingers cannot be kept clean. If he is on a daily paper, his work of yesterday is all undone the next day. He is not, probably, too well paid.

Therefore, I say, let him have his mistakes. Let him continue to believe that no American investment could possibly be called Antofagastas; but must, of necessity, be Autofagastas.

Let him refuse to have anything to do with a noble Venetian family named Tron, and go on making it either Trou or Iron. These little foibles I, for one, gladly overlook; but when it comes to an interloping *d* which deprives me of all the years between 1873 and 1914 I am radiantly grateful, *because I have had them!* I know how good they have been, and therefore how powerless is his inexactitude. His blunder emphasizes my riches.

But, supposing he had been right. . . .

I have been sitting back in an arm-chair idly musing on what I should have missed. I should have missed, in books alone, so much. All Dickens would have been mine, and all Thackeray, and all Trollope; and Meredith's *Richard Feverel* and *Evan Harrington*, and Hardy's *Desperate Remedies* and *Under the Greenwood Tree*. But for me no *Egoist* and no *Far from the Madding Crowd*; no Stevenson, no Kipling, no Conrad, and very little Mark Twain. The best of Arnold I should have had, and the best of Tennyson and Browning, but I should have missed "The Lake Isle of Innisfree."

How old the compositor would have me, I know not, but it may be assumed that I should not be in his calendar at all had I not made some sort of a figure in the world. Let me then assume that when I *d.* in 1873 I was no younger than I am to-day—that is, forty-one. I was, therefore, born in 1832. I might then have seen (I am assuming that my earlier self had the same tastes as his follower) Alfred Mynn and Felix, Fuller Pilch and George Parr, the Nonpareil and old Clarke, but I should have missed our own great performers. I should have seen W. G. as a stripling, but have missed him as a bearded giant. I should have missed completely Stoddart and George Giffen, Ranji and Noble, Fry and Lohmann, F. G. J. Ford and Jessop. But I have seen them, and some of them I may see again. That is why I am so grateful to that grimy devil up in the stuffy composing-room.

And those other performers in a different milieu, whose deeds, however, like those of cricketers, have no record but paper and conversation—who leave behind them, that is, only great memories—what of them? Irving I should have seen only

in his immaturity, and Macready only when I was immature myself. Toole and Terry and Buckstone would have made me laugh, but not Blakeley in his riper fruitiness, not Fred Leslie at all, not Dan Leno. Ellen Terry I should have known as an elvish slip of a girl before that divine huskiness came into her voice; but I should at least have seen her, and thus could have *d.* happier than I might have been.

In painting I should have missed les than sin writing. Corot would still be mine, and Daubigny and Millet and Daumier. The best of the Pre-Raphaelites mine, too, and Millais before he declined; and Tenniel and Leech and the great Keene, although Phil May was not yet, nor Steinlen, nor Wilette, nor Forain, nor Poulbot, nor Mr. Sargent, nor the capricious and masterly John. I could have seen Rodin's "Man with the Broken Nose," some Whistler riverside etchings, and Méryons, but no Muirhead Bones, no D. Y. Camerons. I should have missed Segantini, but a little early work by Matthew and James Maris would have delighted my eyes.

In science I should have missed most, did I value her gifts. But here one could be half-disposed to be envious and wish the compositor no bungler. For at the time of my death the brave horse, with a leg at each corner, was still the friend of man; and no one motored and no one flew, and a photograph was still an expensive luxury, and the movements of life could not be accurately reproduced in a million picture-palaces, and if you wished to hear a singer you had to go to the opera or concert-rooms, and if you wished for piano-music in your home you had to learn to play, and if there were no wires you could not telegraph, and the telephone was not invented, and newspapers were not a halfpenny each, and noble forests were not cut down to make them.

Science, however, has given us a few boons that I might have valued, particularly in medicine. Which reminds me—I wonder what I *d.* of? If it was a cold in the head, I should be no better off now than then, but if it was appendicitis I might be living still. In 1873 appendicitis was not, I believe, even diagnosed; it is now a pastime.

Maurice Hewlett

TO A PRETTY WOMAN

YOU walk so choice and featly fair
Within your flowing telltale gear,
So timid-seeming, half ascare
And half asmile at what you hear,
Or what you know; you guide and steer
Your dainty argosy and rare
Through our rough traffickers, aware
Complacently of eyes that peer,
Of sidelong eyes, of eyes that stare,
Of joy or trouble far or near:
Have you no arms, no shield or spear
For what the world at large may dare?
Is your heart light? your eyes are clear,
You falter not. Have you no care?
You bud your lips, and in your ear
Whisper and promise, hope and prayer
Are as the snowflakes of last year,
Idle, adrift upon the air.

Lady, what is your own affair,
Suspected of the pulpiteer,
Who from his gestatorial chair
Thunders upon your dangerous tear,
Your eye of blue or brown or vair,
Your red and white, that lock of hair
Arrayed in disarray, your wear
Of silken things so frail we fear
To touch them, so we hold you dear

Inhabitant, whom we would spare,
Look you, the satyr's wink or leer
Ready to snatch you to his lair?
Intrigued, perplext, we shift and veer
Our looks, from worship to the glare
Of high displeasure, chafing here
To see you pass us debonnair,
Excusing what we commandeer,
Ignoring what you cannot share.
You pass, you go, and leave us bare,
Feeling the chill, old, crabb'd and sere;
Upon your delicate course you fare,
Whether we kneel or scowl or jeer,
Whether we triumph or despair,
Smiling, possest, unfaltering, sheer
Upon your mark, be it here or there.—
Gods! are you simpleton or fere?

Hugh Walpole

BACHELORS

I

IN any cathedral town there must of necessity be certain characters who are bound and tied to the cobble-stones of the place from whose heart they have sprung. One can picture them in no other town or country—they are that place's property as surely as are the Town Hall, the Baths, the Market Place, and the Cathedral. Their very peculiarities, their little idiosyncrasies, are proudly suggested in that column of the local newspaper headed, "Are You Aware That——?" and, always, their names are to be found after "Amongst those present were——" when any kind of festivity, civic or personal, has occurred.

The cathedral town of S—— in Glebeshire boasted Henry and Robert Chandler, Esqs., amongst their most distinguished "features." "Features" they were, and no visitor could spend a week in that pleasant city without having them pointed out to him, just as he had already been directed towards the great west-end window of the cathedral or the magnificent golden tomb of the Dryden St. Pomfrets.

Harry and Robin Chandler had spent all their days enclosed by the pleasant shelter of S——. They had indeed gone first to Rugby and afterwards to Trinity, Cambridge, but from these places they had always returned to S—— with such precipitation and eagerness that it was evident that even whilst their bodies were being harassed and driven in wilder places their souls were resting in S——.

Robin Chandler was, at the time of this crisis in his history, fifty-five years of age, Harry ten years younger, and they lived

at the corner of the Close in a house shaped like a teapot, and had a motherly and rotund widow as their housekeeper. Of the two, Robin was most certainly the "character." He *looked* a "character." He was precisely the kind of old gentleman whom you would expect to find in the close of an English cathedral. You would say, on seeing Robin Chandler, "Ah! *there* he is!" and you would connect him with the other old gentlemen and the other old maids whom you had, in your time, met in cathedral cities. Robin looked more than his age because his hair was white and his figure rotund. His face was round and amiable and a little foolish, and this foolishness was to be attributed to the fact that he was never sure what he would do with his mouth. He would be amused and would laugh heartily, but even in the climax of the laugh his mouth would wander a little and tremble uncertainly at the corners. He had a dimple in each cheek, and a fine high forehead from which his hair was brushed straight back into a kind of white waterfall that tumbled down the back of his head. He was short and fat and very neat, being dressed generally in pepper-and-salt trousers, a brown velvet waistcoat with brass buttons, a black coat and a black tie. When out of doors he wore a soft black hat cocked jauntily over one ear, and he always trotted along, moving his feet very slightly one in front of the other. He stopped a thousand times during his walk down the High Street, greeting his friends (he had no enemies in the world), and he always had a number of gentle queer things to say—things that no one else would have thought of saying. His interests were natural history, stamps, bowls, and, of course, his brother—and this last swallowed up the others even as the serpent in the Bible swallowed up all the other serpents.

Harry Chandler was of quite another kind: of middle height, red-faced, short brown moustache, brown hair cut close to his head, his eyes confident and unintelligent, his attitude that of a man who knows his world, takes many baths, and has no doubts about anything. He stood at the head of the sporting interests of S——, being president of the golf club and the cricket club; his interests were also apparently political, for he was a most im-

portant member of the Conservative Club that had its palatial apartments half-way down the High Street. He might be seen any morning of the week striding along in a tweed jacket and large and balloon-like knickerbockers, his face very red, his eyes very wide and staring, his air that of a man who knows his power and values it. "Ha, Benson," he would say, or, "Ha, Rawlings!" or even, "Good-day to you, Bumpus!" and sometimes, when a local infant threatened his progress, "Out of the way, little one, out of the way!"

People said, with considerable truth, that it was strange that two brothers, who were so continually together, should be so different, but when one knew Robin Chandler intimately one discovered that he had been endeavouring, all his days, to acquire some of his brother's habits and characteristics. He would try at times to be domineering, hearty, and monosyllabic, and of course he always failed. He had the pleasantest of voices, but it was the voice of an amiable canary, and he never could express himself without using a great number of words. That Robin worshipped his brother was one of the items of natural history treasured by the city of S——.

He had worshipped from that day, so many years ago, when, a lonely little boy of ten, he had been informed that he was henceforth to have a companion in life.

He had been, always, from the first a submissive character who depended very much on other people's affection for happiness. It had been, the ladies of S—— always said, a shamefully one-sided affair.

Harry Chandler's attitude to his brother was one of indulgent tolerance. "Dear old fellow," he would call him. "He's an odd kind of chap, my brother," he would confide to a listening friend. "You'd never think we were brothers, now, would you? You should just see him try to play golf. Stands there with his legs apart, his body stiff as a rod, biting his lips, don't you know—serious as anything—and then he clean misses it, you know. He's a dear old fellow, but, between you and me, a bit of an old woman."

Robin was quite aware of his brother's attitude, but, indeed,

no other seemed possible. He had watched, with wide-eyed wonder, his brother's growth. The things Harry could do! Was there anyone who played games with such confidence, anyone who could hold his own in a gathering of men with such assurance and success, anyone so fascinating in a drawing-room, anyone in the world with such captivating "savoir-faire"? Robin, himself, was afraid of women, except very old and lonely ones. He had, long ago, been "horribly" in love, and she might, one imagines, have loved him in return had he pursued the matter; but—what *would* Harry do without him? No, until Harry himself married, Robin must send the other sex to limbo. And through all these years what agitations there had been! For a long time it had seemed as certain that Harry would marry as that night must follow the day. That his brother was fascinating to women Robin held as surely as that he himself had no attraction for them whatever! Terrible hours! Terrible apparitions of beautiful young women to whom Harry would give their first golfing lesson! Terrible "alarums and excursions"! "Oh! I hear, Mr. Chandler, that we are to congratulate your brother . . .!" Is not S—— a cathedral city?

And yet, always, Robin was delivered. Through all these years Harry had not been even engaged. Robin wondered at the women, but, from his heart, was grateful to them, and, with every year, the assurance of safety grew. Now, always, he put the terrible thought from him. Sometimes in the night it would leap out from the dark, with mouth a-grin and widespread claws. "What'll you do, my friend, if it *does* happen? It may, you know. Plenty of time yet. . . . A nice kind of time you'll have alone——" Well, that was a bad half-hour, but at the end of it the grinning beast was beaten back to its lair.

There was nothing that Harry could do that did not interest Robin, and this, men at the Club said, was bad for Harry.

"Really, Chandler's getting a bit of a bore. Thinks the least little thing he's done ought to be sent up to the *Times*. All that silly old brother of his."

But they liked "the silly old brother"—liked him, were the truth known, better than Harry. Robin would

have been immensely surprised at his popularity had he ever known it.

There came an afternoon. It was half-past four on a day of late October, and the cathedral bells were drowsily ringing for Evensong. Robin was standing at the window of the little smoking-room, where they always had tea, waiting his brother's return from golf. It was dusk, and at the farther end of the Close, above an ivy-covered wall, low between two old Georgian houses, the blue evening sky, fading into palest saffron, showed. The cobbles had caught the evening light, and figures—two old ladies, a Canon, an old gentleman in a bath-chair—were moving, like notes in a piece of music, across the grass square to the cathedral doors. It was a sight that Robin had seen year after year from that same window, and it had always for him drama as intense as anything that Napoleon or Wellington can have felt from the top of some smoke-clad hill. "There's Miss Barton. I thought she was in London. I wonder whether her brother's left her anything in his will. There's Prendergast. It's his month, I suppose. How cross it will make him, having to come in from his golf!"

He was conscious, as he heard the bells, of the quiet, cosy little room behind him filled with dusty old things that belonged to every period of his experiences—old college photographs, old books, old caps that his brother had worn in different teams which his presence had honoured. There, too, the kettle was humming, the tea-cake was hot, the clock—the same old gold clock—ticked the minutes away. He ruffled his hair with his hand, until he looked more than ever like an amiable, well-fed bird. The bells had fallen to a slow monotone—"Hurry up—hurry up—hurry up." . . . There were steps on the cobbles, a key in the door, a pause in the hall, then his brother had come in.

"Fancy, Harry," said Robin, moving towards the tea-things, "Miss Brandon's back. I wonder whether——"

"I say, old man"—Harry's voice was, for perhaps the first time in his life, nervous and hesitating—"Robin, old boy—hem! You must congratulate me—hem—yes—ha!—I'm engaged to

Miss Pinsent. She—hum—accepted me on the—hum—golf-course this afternoon."

II

There followed then for Robin Chandler the most terrible weeks, weeks far more terrible than anything that he had ever imagined possible for human courage to support.

It was demanded of him, on every side, that he should be false. He must be false to his brother; he must pretend to him that he was glad and happy that this had occurred; he must be false to all the old women of S——, who crowded about him, eagerly watching for any sign of that wound which, they were assured amongst themselves, his brother's engagement must have dealt him; above all, he must be false to the girl, Iris Pinsent, who instantly demanded his affection and (such was always her attitude to the other sex) protection from the roughness of the world.

Iris Pinsent—golden, fragile, and appealing—was straight from the schoolroom. Her father had, six months before, arrived at S—— as governor of its prison, and, during those six months, Iris had put up her hair and "come out." She had seemed to Robin so entirely of the schoolroom that he had never, for the wildest instant, considered her as a possible wife for anybody. Now every day she appeared, ran over their old teapot house as though it were her own, won the instant and undying hatred of Mrs. Rumbold, the housekeeper, sat upon Harry's knee, pulled Harry's hair, untied his tie and tied it up again, laughed and sang and danced about the two elderly men as though they were puppies quite new to a brilliant world.

No one—not Robin himself—had any conception of the depths of Robin's suffering. "Mr. Robert Chandler *must* be feeling his brother's engagement," said one old lady to another old lady, and *another* old lady to *another* old lady. "But really you wouldn't think so, to look at him. He'll feel it after the marriage though, when he's all alone"—and the old ladies either licked their lips or wiped their eyes, according to their characters.

To Robin it was exactly as though he were standing on the very edge of a slimy and bottomless pit. Towards this pit his feet were slipping, and soon, very soon, the inevitable moment of descent would come; but meanwhile, gripping with his feet, digging his hands into the slime, he would hold on as long as he could . . . the world should not know until it must.

He trotted about the town, went to tea parties, played bowls, was as neat and as careful, as interested in his neighbours' affairs, as kind and thoughtful as ever he had been. Harry Chandler, who was, of course, not a discerning man, was hurt at this indifference.

"Really, Robin," he said one evening, when they were alone, "I don't believe you'll mind it a bit when I'm gone."

Robin paused, then said—"Of course, Harry, I shall miss you—terribly," and that was all.

Robin, in fact, ran from his despair. There were horrible moments when it caught him up, and then there was a grinding cold at his heart; but these moments with all the force of his character he beat down. But what was he to do? What should he, could he, do? He had devoted his life, every moment and thought of it, to his brother's interests. He could not now, at his age, build up other gods, worship at other shrines. His bowls, his stamps, he laughed aloud when he thought of them. His life had been simply that he should watch his brother's triumphs, soften his brother's defeats, listen to his brother's ideas, anticipate his brother's wants. This may seem to many a humiliating rôle for a man: Robin Chandler did not feel it so; he was simply grateful that he had so splendid a person as his brother to play shadow to. He fancied that many people in the town thought him a lucky fellow.

No longer, even now, was there any need of him as audience, no longer was his opinion invited, no longer his praise demanded —and yet, even in these early weeks of the engagement, Robin fancied that Miss Pinsent was not proving quite so good a listener as she might. Indeed he began to wonder whether Miss Pinsent liked being a listener at all. She had so much to say, so many of her own achievements and triumphs to recount.

Robin, as he watched the two of them together, wondered at first how any one *could* treat his brother with such casual equality; then, as the days passed and this became a common sight, he wondered whether there had not been something a little absurd about his own attitude.

Very reluctantly and only after a very considerable time Robin was compelled to confess to himself that Harry was not quite at his best as a lover. Harry, whilst Miss Pinsent sprang around him, laughed at him, mocked him, imitated him, burlesqued him, was often at a loss. He had found at once that his heavy, authoritative manner had no effect upon Miss Pinsent.

"Ha!—hum——" she would imitate him. "How d'y do, Rawlings."

Robin, listening in amazement, wondered whether there could be any love in Miss Pinsent's heart, but apparently love there really was, of a kittenish, puppyish kind. Another astonishing thing was that Miss Pinsent was, it seemed, more afraid of Robin than of Harry. She was only, on the rarest occasions, "kittenish" with Robin, but would stand in front of him and ask him quite serious questions about Life and Bowls and Bird's Eggs, and Robin would ruffle his hair and answer her to the best of his ability. Really, Robin was forced to confess to himself, poor Harry looked quite foolish and even silly on many occasions. "Why does he let her behave like that?" he thought. "I do hope that other people don't notice it."

He was pleasantly aware—if anything could be pleasant at this terrible time—that he was acquiring now an independent existence in people's eyes. This had begun, of course, with people being sorry for him, but that the proud little man would not allow for a moment. He had been, for many, many years, overshadowed by his brother; but now that his brother was allotted and disposed of, Robin Chandler stood out all by himself. "Poor little Mr. Chandler!" the ladies said. "We must show him a little kindness just now." And Robin was obliged to confess that he liked it. Nevertheless, it must not be supposed that, during all this time, he was not an utterly miserable man.

Then, as the weeks passed, his discomfort grew. He wished, how fervently, that his brother would deal with the girl in some more dignified and satisfactory fashion. "Why, even I," Robin thought to himself, "have more influence over her than he has. She never plays about with me like that. Really, Harry——"

But the tragic side of it all was that Harry was not a happy lover. Why was he a lover at all, if not a happy one? All Harry's fine spirit had departed. His honest brow wore a puzzled look that never in all its five-and-forty years it had worn before. He began sentences, "I wonder whether——" "Do you think, Robin——" and then never finished them. He abandoned the Conservative Club, and although he played golf with Miss Pinsent on most afternoons of the week, that beloved game seemed to have lost most of its charm.

He no longer on his return would proclaim to his brother that he had done a bogey five in three, or beaten old Major Waggett (his especial foe) by two up and three to play. No, he returned and drank his tea in silence. Robin's heart ached for him.

Once the two of them had, in Robin's presence, a most horrible quarrel. They were all having tea together in the little dusty smoking-room, and Miss Pinsent, striking unexpectedly her lover in the chest (one of her loving, playful tricks), upset his tea. He swore then with a frank volubility that spoke of many weeks' difficult restraint. She cried, rushed from the room and the house, vowing that she would never return. . . .

But, of course, she did return, and that very shortly afterwards. There was a reconciliation—but Robin found, to his own exceeding surprise, that he was rather ashamed of both of them. "I wish—I wish," he thought, "that I didn't see Harry like this. Love affects people very strangely."

Then, on an afternoon of pouring rain, Robin Chandler was beating his way up the High Street, hastening home to warmth and tea. He was sheltered by an enormous umbrella, and this gave him precisely the appearance of a walking mushroom. His arm was touched, and, turning round, he saw Miss Pinsent, who was looking bedraggled and unhappy, without any umbrella at all.

"I didn't know it was going to rain. It looked so fine . . ." Her voice trembled and she betrayed the imminence of tears—she took his arm and they walked along together. Then, suddenly, he was aware that she was talking about Harry, and speaking as though she needed Robin's advice about him. Robin's heart began to beat fast. "Did he really think that Harry loved her? . . . Would Harry really be kind to her? . . . Of course she was very fond of him, but . . . Did he think that differences in ages *really* made much trouble afterwards? . . . Of course she was very fond . . ."

This may be definitely put down as the most critical moment in all Mr. Robin Chandler's long life. The Tempter, with that bewildering precipitance and complete disregard for the justice of a forewarning prelude that he invariably betrays, sprang, there and then, in the dripping High Street of S——, upon the poor little man.

Robin saw, with a horrible distinctness, that the power was given him to sway Miss Pinsent. A little hesitation on his part, an unexpressed but nevertheless definite agreement with her as to the danger of unequal ages in marriage, a hint or two as to possible harshnesses and brutalities in Harry's character—he saw with amazing and horrible clearness that these things would be quite enough. By to-morrow afternoon Mr. Henry Chandler would no longer be engaged to Miss Iris Pinsent. . . .

They halted for an instant at the top of the High Street. The wind was rushing round the corner and the rain lashed the umbrella. Robin could see the wall of the cathedral, very grey and grim, and one corner of the Close with the rain running in little driven lines across the cobbles.

"You'll have your brother back again. . . . You won't be a lonely, lonely old man. . . ."

Then with a shake of his shoulders the thing was gone and, as they drove their way into the Close, he began eagerly, exhaustively, almost breathlessly, to prove to her that his brother was indeed a god among men.

III

It was arranged that Harry should go and stay with the Pinsents for a week in a house that they had in the country some miles from S——, and that during that time the date of the wedding should be settled. Robin saw with confused feelings his brother's departure; it was the first time for many years that they had been separated—this was melancholy enough—but also he was compelled to admit that it was a relief to him that, for a week at any rate, he would not be forced to watch his brother under such conditions. He found, indeed, that in a resigned, rather dejected kind of fashion, he was quite happy. Mrs. Rumbold, the housekeeper, could not make enough fuss of him. Harry had always been so emphatically the master in the house that she had never considered Mr. Robert. It had always been Harry who had arranged the hours of meals, and did he in the summer come in very late, well, then, Mr. Robert waited.

But now——! No, Mr. Harry had acted as a selfish and inconsiderate man, leaving poor Mr. Robert all alone "without a thought." What did an old thing of his age want to do with marriage—choosing so young a girl, too—almost indecent! Had Miss Pinsent treated Mrs. Rumbold with care and deference, then there might have been another opinion altogether. As it was—"She's a regular young Slap-in-the-face, if you ask me," said Mrs. Rumbold to her chosen friends. "Slap and come again, that's what *she* is. You mark my words."

Therefore Robin received an attention, a deference, that had never been his before. And not only from Mrs. Rumbold! The whole town offered it him. The town had always been fond of him, but so modest and retiring had he been that the comment always was—"Mr. Robert Chandler? . . . Oh yes! . . . Such a nice little man. No one sees very much of him. No one *knows* him, you might say, but you couldn't help liking him!"

But, during this week, in what an amazing way did he expand, flourish, blossom! It was at first incredible to him

that people should be interested in him for himself, and fifty-five years' convictions about life are difficult things to shake. But behold! Whereas before it had been, "Oh, Mr. Chandler, your brother has so kindly promised to dine with us on Thursday night, I wonder whether you could come too?" Now it was, "Do come and dine, Mr. Chandler, *any* night as long as you give us a day or two's notice." People found him indeed a great deal more amusing by himself than he had been before in his brother's company. Always there had been that anxious glance in his brother's direction to see whether everything were well, always that modest hesitation about giving any opinion at all whilst his brother was present. Now he would sit perched on the edge of a sofa, his hands on his fat little knees, the dimples dancing in his cheeks, his hair on end, his chuckle (a chuckle entirely his own) over some joke that he saw ahead of him and would very shortly deliver to his audience. By the end of the week he had decided that:

(1) He liked women after all.

(2) He would be perfectly wretched alone, but that he would bear up as well as he could.

(3) He'd really no idea that he'd got so much to say.

(4) He felt younger than he had ever done before.

"Still," he said to himself, "dear old Harry's marriage will be too dreadful. I simply don't know what I shall do with myself."

The afternoon of Harry's return arrived. Robin stood at the window as he had done on that other horrible day when he had first heard of the engagement.

He was inevitably reminded of that day, for now again there, above the low wall, pale blue was fading into saffron, across the grass figures were stealing; already the bell was dropping into its "Hurry up—hurry up—hurry up."

Robin watched, and then suddenly, like a flame, like a fire, came the truth. He knew, yes, he knew, let him deny it as he might, that never in all his five-and-fifty years had he enjoyed a week as he had enjoyed this last one. He had tasted delights,

known extravagances and excitements that had never before been his. He had been free!

He stared round bewildered. What treachery to Harry! What irony that so soon he should have changed from despair to what was not far from triumph! He remembered the bitter dismay that so short a time ago had, in this very room, wrapped him round.

But now he was a man of freedom! No one's shadow, depending upon no one in the world for his independent happiness! His eyes fell upon a picture above the fireplace, a water-colour painting of a grey fell and a blue lake at evening. It was a picture that he loved, but Harry had declared it "A dreary thing"—and it was only this week that it had been raised to that place of honour. After all, Harry would not care now, now when so soon he was to have a house of his own.

The door was flung open, and Harry was there, there with him in the room.

"I say!" he closed the door behind him and came forward. "Robin, she's chucked me!"

"Oh!"

"Yes—jolly well chucked me—last night when we were alone she told me. Been mistaken . . . misjudged her feelin's—was too young . . . all the rest of it."

"Oh! Harry. . . . Oh, I'm sorry!"

Harry strode twice or thrice up and down the room. "Yes, chucked, by Jove! At first, you know, you could have knocked me down with a feather. But now—damn it—I don't know, Robin, that I'm not glad. She said it was largely some talk she'd had with you about me—how you'd praised me no end, and then she'd seen that she didn't feel about me quite like that, and that she couldn't marry me unless she did. The contrast struck her, don't you know. . . ."

He paused, then went on: "But I'm glad, dashed if I'm not. It's awful being engaged. . . . I felt it all the time, really. She never said things about me as you've always done—never knew me a bit as you do. It's a relief to be free—it *is* really. I missed you like anything. You were always so sympathetic

and understanding. It'll be jolly to have you to tell things to again. . . . Yes—dash it—hum—ha—— Won't the fellows at the Club laugh? . . . Well, I must go and clean. Tell old Ma Rumbold to hurry with the tea."

He went out.

Robin waited a little, then, with the very shadow of a sigh, walked to the window. He looked out for a moment at the gathering dusk, then got a chair, climbed on to it and carefully took down the water-colour from the wall.

John Ruskin

CRITICISM WITH A VENGEANCE

BROWNING'S *Men and Women* was sent to Ruskin by Mrs. Browning in November 1855. Writing on November 5th, she says that it is not that he may say "pleasant things" about the book, as he had about her own works, but that he might have a sign of their esteem.

Ruskin did not reply until December 2nd. It is not uninteresting to note that only a few days earlier he had written to Tennyson (November 12th, 1855), beginning thus: "I hear of so many stupid and feelingless misunderstandings of *Maud* that I think it may perhaps give you some little pleasure to know my sincere admiration of it throughout."

Before printing Ruskin's letter it would be well to quote the poem which forms its principal subject-matter, for reference:

POPULARITY

Stand still, true poet that you are!
I know you; let me try and draw you.
Some night you'll fail us; when afar
You rise, remember one man saw you,
Knew you, and named a star!

My star, God's glow-worm! Why extend
That loving hand of His which leads you,
Yet locks you safe from end to end
Of this dark world, unless He needs you,
Just saves your light to spend?

His clenched hand shall unclose at last,
I know, and let out all the beauty:
My poet holds the future fast,
Accepts the coming ages' duty,
Their present for this past.

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow
  Shall clear, to God the chalice raising:
"Others give best at first, but Thou
  For ever set'st our table praising,
Keep'st the good wine till now!"

Meantime, I'll draw you as you stand,
  With few or none to watch and wonder:
I'll say—a fisher, on the sand
  By Tyre the old, with ocean-plunder,
A netful, brought to land.

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
  Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
Whereof one drop worked miracles,
  And coloured like Astarte's eyes
Raw silk the merchant sells?

And each bystander of them all
  Could criticize, and quote tradition
How depths of blue sublimed some pall
  —To get which, pricked a king's ambition;
Worth sceptre, crown, and ball.

Yet there's the dye, in that rough mesh,
  The sea has only just o'erwhispered!
Live whelks, each lip's beard dripping fresh,
  As if they still the water's lisp heard
Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

Enough to furnish Solomon
  Such hangings for his cedar-house,
That, when gold-robed he took the throne
  In that abyss of blue, the Spouse
Might swear his presence shone

Most like the centre-spike of gold
  Which burns deep in the blue-bell's womb,
What time, with ardours manifold,
  The bee goes singing to her groom,
Drunken and overbold.

Mere conchs! not fit for warp or woof!
  Till cunning come to pound and squeeze
And clarify—refine to proof
  The liquor filtered by degrees,
While the world stands aloof.

And there's the extract, flasked and fine,
  And priced and saleable at last!
And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes combine
  To paint the future from the past,
Put blue into their line.

Hobbs hints blue—straight he turtle eats:
  Nobbs prints blue—claret crowns his cup;
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats,—
  Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?
What porridge had John Keats?

Here follows Ruskin's letter, now printed for the first time by the kind permission of his executors, and of Mr. Francis Edwards, who possesses the original document. Ruskin was always characteristic; never more so than in this tremendous scrutiny. One does not uphold his letter as model treatment for the donor of a presentation copy; but it has special points of advantage over those which gush indiscriminately, and countless points of advantage over those other innutritious missives which dwell with enthusiasm on the pleasure with which the book is certain to provide the writer—when he has time to read it.

Denmark Hill,
December 2nd, 1855.

Dear Mr. Browning,

I know you have been wondering that I did not write, but I could not till now—and hardly can, now: not because I am busy, nor careless, but because I cannot at all make up my mind about these poems of yours; and, so far as my mind *is* made up, I am not sure whether it is in the least right. Of their power there can of course be no question—nor do you need to be told of it; for every one who *has* power of this kind, knows it—*must* know it. But as to the Presentation of the Power,

I am in great doubt. Being hard worked at present, and not being able to give the cream of the day to poetry—when I take up these poems in the evening I find them absolutely and literally a set of the most amazing conundrums that ever were proposed to me. I try at them for say twenty minutes—in which time I make out about twenty lines ; but not consecutive lines, always having to miss two, for every one that I make out. I enjoy the twenty, each separately, very much, but the puzzlement about the intermediate ones increases in comfortlessness till I get a headache, and give in.

Now that you may exactly understand the way I feel about them—I will read, with you, one poem—as I read it to myself —with all my comments and questions. I open at random— " Cleon " ?—no—that's not a fair example, being harder than most; " The Twins " ?—no—I have made out that—(except the fifth stanza)—so it is not a fair example on the other side, being easier than most; " Popularity " ?—yes, that touches the matter in hand.

> " Stand still, true poet that you are!
> I know you ; let me try and draw you."

Does this mean : literally—stand still ? or where was the poet figuratively going—and why couldn't he be drawn as he went ?

" Some night you'll fail us." Why some *night*—rather than some day ? " Fail us." How ? Die ?

" When afar you rise." Where ?—how ? " Remember," etc. Very good—I understand.

" My star, God's glow-worm." Very fine. I understand and like that.

" Why extend that loving hand." Grammatically, this applies to the poet. The ellipsis of " should He " throws me quite out—like a step in a floor which one doesn't expect.

" Yet locks you safe." How does God's hand lock him ? Do you mean—keeps him from being seen ?—and how does it make him safe ? Why is a poet safer or more locked up than anybody else ?

I go on—in hope. "His clenched hand—beauty." Very good, but I don't understand why the hand should have held close so long—which is just the point I wanted to be explained—why the poet had to be locked up?

"My poet holds the future fast." How? Do you mean he anticipates it in his mind—trusts in it? I don't know if you mean that, because I don't know if poets *do* that. If you meant that—I wish you had said so plainly.

"That day the earth's feastmaster's brow." Who is the earth's F.? An angel?—or Everybody?

"The chalice *raising*." This grammatically agrees with "*brow*," and makes me uncomfortable. "Others," etc. Very pretty. I like that.

"Meantime I'll draw you." Do you mean—his Cork?—we have not had anything about painting for ever so long. Very well—*do* draw him, then; I should like to have him drawn very much.

"I'll say—a fisher," etc. Now—where *are* you going to?—this is, I believe, pure malice against me, for having said that painters should always grind their own colours.

"Who has not heard . . . merchant sells?" Do you mean—the silk that the merchant sells Raw—or what do you want with the merchant at all?

"And each bystander." Who are these bystanders? I didn't hear of any before. Are they people who have gone to see the fishing?

"Could criticize and quote tradition." Criticize what? the fishing? And why should they—what was wrong in it?—quote tradition? Do you mean about purple? But if they made purple at the time, it wasn't tradition merely—but experience. You might as well tell me you heard the colourmen in Long Acre quote tradition touching their next cargo of indigo, or cochineal.

"Depths . . . sublimed." I don't know what you mean by "sublimed." Made sublime?—if so, it is not English. To sublime means to evaporate dryly, I believe, and has participle "sublimated."

"Worth sceptre, crown, and ball." Indeed. Was there ever such a fool of a King?—You ought to have put a note saying who.

"Yet there's," etc. Well, I understand that, and it's very pretty.

"Enough to furnish Solomon," etc. I don't think Solomon's spouse swore—at least not about blue-bells. I understand this bit, but fear most people won't. How many have noticed a blue-bell's stamen?

"Bee to her groom," I don't understand. I thought there was only one queen-bee and *she* never was out o' nights—nor came home drunk or disorderly. Besides, if she does—unless you had told me what o'clock in the morning she comes home at—the simile is of no use to me.

"Mere conchs . . . art." Well—but has this to do with the poet? Who "pounds" *him*? I don't understand.

"World stands aloof." Yes—from the purple manufactory—but from pounding of poets?—does it?—and if so, who distils, refines, and bottles them?

"Flasked and fine." Now *is* that what you call painting a poet? Under the whole and sole image of a bottle of Blue, with a bladder over the cork? The Arabian fisherman with his genie was nothing to this.

"Hobbs, Nobbs," etc., "paint the future." Why the future? Do you mean *in* the future?

"Blue into their line." I don't understand. Do you mean quote the poet, or write articles upon him—or in his style? And if so—was this what God kept him *safe* for?—to feed Nobbs with turtle? Is this what you call "accepting the future ages' duty"? I don't understand.

"What porridge"? Porridge is a Scotch dish, I believe; typical of bad fare. Do you mean that Keats had bad fare?—But if he had—how was he kept safe to the world's end?—I don't understand at all!!!!!!!

Now, that is the way I read—as well as I can—poem after poem—picking up a little bit here and there and enjoying it—but wholly unable to put anything together. I can't say I

have really made out any one yet, except the epistle from the Arabian physician, which I like immensely, and I am only a stanza or so out with one or two others—in "By the fireside," for instance, I am only *dead* beat by the 41–43, and in "Fra Lippo" I am only fast at the grated orris-root, which I looked for in the *Encyclopædia* and couldn't find; and at the "There's for you—give me six months"—because I don't know *what's* for you.

Well, how far all this is as it should be, I really know not. There is a stuff and fancy in your work which assuredly is in no other living writer's, and how far this purple of it *must* be within this terrible shell, and only to be fished for among threshing of foam and slippery rocks, I don't know. There are truths and depths in it, far beyond anything I have read except Shakespeare—and truly, if you had just written *Hamlet*, I believe I should have written to you precisely this kind of letter—merely quoting your own Rosencrantz against you—"I understand you not—my lord." I cannot write in enthusiastic praise—because I look at you every day as a monkey does at a cocoa-nut—having great faith in the milk—hearing it rattle indeed—inside—but quite beside myself for the Fibres. Still less can I write in blame. When a man has real power, God only knows how he *can* bring it out, or ought to bring it out. But, I would pray you—faithfully—heartily—to consider with yourself how far you can amend matters and make the real virtue of your work acceptable and profitable to more people.

For one thing, I entirely deny and refuse the right of any poet to require me to pronounce words short and long, exactly as he likes—to require me to read a plain and harsh and straightforward piece of prose, "Till I felt where the foldskirts [fly, redundant] open. Then, once more, I prayed," as a dactylic verse, with "skirts" for a short syllable; "foldskirtsfly"—as tremendous a long monosyllable as any in the language, and to say "Wunce—mur—y prayed"—instead of "once more I."

And, in the second place, I entirely deny that a poet of your real dramatic power ought to let *himself* come up, as you constantly do—through all manner of characters—so that every

now and then poor Pippa herself shall speak a long piece of Robert Browning.

And, in the third place, your ellipses are quite unconscionable: before one can get through ten lines, one has to patch you up in twenty places—wrong or right—and if one hasn't much stuff of one's own to spare to patch with, you are worse than the worst Alpine Glacier I ever crossed. Bright—and deep enough truly—but so full of clefts that half the journey has to be done with ladder and hatchet.

However, I have found some great things in you already, and I think you must be a wonderful mine, when I have real time and strength to set to work properly. That bit about the Bishop and St. Praxed—in the older poems—is very glorious. Rossetti showed it me. In fact, I oughtn't to write to you yet at all; but such is my state of mind at present, and it may perhaps be well that you should know it—even though it may soon change to a more acceptant one—because it most certainly represents the feelings of a good many more—besides myself—who ought to admire you and learn from you, but can't because you are so difficult.

Well—there's a specimen for you of my art of saying pleasant things to my friends.

I have no time left now for any unpleasant ones—so I must just say good-bye and beg you to accept—with my dear Mrs. Browning—the assurance of my exceeding regard and respect.

Ever most faithfully yours,

J. Ruskin[1]

Browning replied on December 10th, and his letter in full is to be seen in Cook and Wedderburn's edition of Ruskin, vol. xxxvi. p. 34. I quote a little:—

"Why, I prithee, friend and fellow-student, why, having told the poet what you read,—may I not turn to the bystanders, and tell them a bit of my mind about their own stupid thanklessness and

[1] According to Sir E. T. Cook, Browning, writing to Rossetti, referred to this letter as "a dear, too dear, and good letter"; but there is some confusion, as Ruskin's letter to Rossetti containing the reference was dated October 29th, 1855, whereas he did not receive *Men and Women* till November, nor acknowledge it till December. The "dear, too dear, and good letter" was another.

mistaking? Is the jump too much, then? The whole is all but a simultaneous feeling with me.

"The other hard measure you deal me I won't bear—about my requiring you to pronounce words short and long, exactly as I like. Nay, but exactly as the language likes, in this case. *Foldskirts* not a trochee? A spondee possible in English? Two of the 'longest monosyllables' continuing to be each of the whole length when in junction? Sentence: let the delinquent be forced to supply the stone-cutter with a thousand companions to 'Affliction sore—long time he bore,' after the fashion of 'He lost his life—by a pen-knife'—'He turned to clay—last Good Friday,' 'Departed hence—nor owed sixpence,' and so on—so would pronounce a jury accustomed from the nipple to say lord and landlord, bridge and Cambridge, Gog and Magog, man and woman, house and workhouse, coal and charcoal, cloth and broad-cloth, skirts and fold-skirts, more and once more—in short! Once *more* I prayed!—is the confession of a self-searching professor! 'I stand here for law!'

"The last charge I cannot answer, for you may be right in preferring it, however unwitting I am of the fact. I *may* put Robert Browning into Pippa and other men and maids. If so, *peccavi*; but I don't see myself in them, at all events."

To this letter Ruskin replied by sending a presentation copy of a book; Mrs. Browning acknowledged it affectionately; and all was well, as it not always is after such a riot of frankness. A year later Ruskin wrote to Browning calling *Aurora Leigh* the "greatest *poem* in the English language, unsurpassed by anything but Shakespeare—*not* surpassed by Shakespeare's 'Sonnets,' and therefore the greatest poem in the language.

E. V. Lucas

THE CHOICE

A MOTHER lost her soldier son. The news came to her in despatches from the war. He had fallen fighting nobly at the head of his regiment.

She was inconsolable. "Oh that I might see him again!" she prayed. "If only for five minutes—but to see him!"

An angel answered her prayer. "For five minutes," the angel said.

"Quick! quick!" said the mother, her tears turned to momentary joy.

"Yes," said the angel, "but think a little. He was a grown man. There are thirty years to choose from. How would you see him?"

The mother paused and wondered.

"Would you see him," said the angel, "as a soldier dying heroically at his post? Would you see him as he left you to join the transport? Would you see him as you first saw him in his uniform? Would you see him again as on that day at school when he stepped to the platform to receive the highest honours a boy could have?"

"How did you know?" the mother asked, her eyes lighting.

The angel smiled. "Would you see him as a baby at your breast? Would you——"

"No," said the mother, "I would have him for five minutes as he was one day when he ran in from the garden to ask my forgiveness for being naughty. He was so small and so unhappy; and he was very hot and the tears were making streaks down his face through the garden dirt. And he flew to my arms with such force that he hurt me."

Stephen Leacock

SPOOF

Our Thousand-guinea Novel

NEW! FASCINATING! PERPLEXING!

READERS are requested to note that this novel has taken our special prize of a cheque for a thousand guineas. This alone guarantees for all intelligent readers a palpitating interest in every line of it. Among the thousands of MSS. which reached us—many of them coming in carts early in the morning, and moving in a dense phalanx, indistinguishable from the Covent Garden Market waggons ; others pouring down our coal-chute during the working hours of the day ; and others again being slipped surreptitiously into our letter-box by pale, timid girls, scarcely more than children, after nightfall (in fact many of them came in their nightgowns),—this manuscript alone was the sole one—in fact the only one—to receive the prize of a cheque of a thousand guineas. To other competitors we may have given, inadvertently perhaps, a bag of sovereigns or a string of pearls, but to this story alone is awarded the first prize by the unanimous decision of our judges.

When we say that the latter body included two members of the Cabinet, two Lords of the Admiralty, and two bishops, with power in case of dispute to send all the MSS. to the Czar of Russia, our readers will breathe a sigh of relief to learn that the decision was instant and unanimous. Each one of them, in reply to our telegram, answered immediately SPOOF.

More than this. This novel represents the last word in up-to-date fiction. It is well known that the modern novel has got far beyond the point of mere story-telling. The childish

attempt to *interest* the reader has long since been abandoned by all the best writers. They refuse to do it. The modern novel must convey a message, or else it must paint a picture, or remove a veil, or open a new chapter in human psychology. Otherwise it is no good. SPOOF does all of these things. The reader rises from its perusal perplexed, troubled, and yet so filled with information that rising itself is a difficulty.

We cannot, for obvious reasons, insert the whole of the first chapter. But the portion here presented was praised by *The Saturday Afternoon Review* as giving one of the most graphic and at the same time realistic pictures of America ever written in fiction.

Of the characters whom our readers are to imagine seated on the deck—on one of the many decks (all connected by elevators)—of the *Gloritania,* one word may be said. Vere de Lancy is (as the reviewers have under oath declared) a typical young Englishman of the upper class. He is nephew and heir to the Duke of ——, but of this fact no one on the ship, except the captain, the purser, the steward, and the passengers are, or is, aware.

In order entirely to conceal his identity, Vere de Lancy is travelling under the assumed name of Lancy de Vere. In order the better to hide the object of his journey, Lancy de Vere (as we shall now call him, though our readers will be able at any moment to turn his name backwards) has given it to be understood that he is travelling merely as a gentleman anxious to see America. This naturally baffles all those in contact with him.

The girl at his side—but perhaps we may best let her speak for herself.

. . . . .

CHAPTER I

Somehow as they sat together on the deck of the great steamer in the afterglow of the sunken sun, listening to the throbbing of the propeller (a rare sound which neither of them of course had

ever heard before), de Vere felt that he must speak to her. Something of the mystery of the girl fascinated him. What was she doing here alone with no one but her mother and her maid, on the bosom of the Atlantic? Why was she here? Why was she not somewhere else? The thing puzzled, perplexed him. It would not let him alone. It fastened upon his brain. Somehow he felt that if he tried to drive it away, it might nip him in the ankle.

In the end he spoke.

"And you, too," he said, leaning over her deck-chair, "are going to America?"

He had suspected this ever since the boat left Liverpool. Now at length he framed his growing conviction into words.

"Yes," she assented, and then timidly, "It is 3,213 miles wide, is it not?"

"Yes," he said, "and 1,781 miles deep! It reaches from the forty-ninth parallel to the Gulf of Mexico."

"Oh," cried the girl, "what a vivid picture! I seem to see it."

"Its major axis," he went on, his voice sinking almost to a caress, "is formed by the Rocky Mountains, which are practically a prolongation of the Cordilleran Range. It is drained," he continued——

"How splendid!" said the girl.

"Yes, is it not? It is drained by the Mississippi, the St. Lawrence, and—dare I say it?—by the Upper Colorado."

Somehow his hand had found hers in the half gloaming, but she did not check him.

"Go on," she said very simply; "I think I ought to hear it."

"The great central plain of the interior," he continued, "is formed by a vast alluvial deposit carried down as silt by the Mississippi. East of this the range of the Alleghanies, nowhere more than eight thousand feet in height, forms a secondary or subordinate axis from which the watershed falls to the Atlantic."

He was speaking very quietly but earnestly. No man had ever spoken to her like this before.

"What a wonderful picture!" she murmured half to herself, half aloud, and half not aloud and half not to herself.

"Through the whole of it," de Vere went on, "there run railways, most of them from east to west, though a few run from west to east. The Pennsylvania system alone has twenty-one thousand miles of track."

"Twenty-one thousand miles," she repeated; already she felt her will strangely subordinate to his.

He was holding her hand firmly clasped in his and looking into her face.

"Dare I tell you," he whispered, "how many employees it has?"

"Yes," she gasped, unable to resist.

"A hundred and fourteen thousand," he said.

There was silence. They were both thinking. Presently she spoke, timidly.

"Are there any cities there?"

"Cities!" he said enthusiastically, "ah, yes! let me try to give you a word-picture of them. Vast cities—with tall buildings, reaching to the very sky. Why, for instance, the New Woolworth Building in New York——"

"Yes, yes," she broke in quickly, "how high is it?"

"Seven hundred and fifty feet."

The girl turned and faced him.

"Don't," she said. "I can't bear it. Some other time, perhaps, but not now."

She had risen and was gathering up her wraps. "And you," she said, "why are you going to America?"

"Why?" he answered. "Because I want to see, to know, to learn. And when I have learned and seen and known, I want other people to see and to learn and to know. I want to write it all down, all the vast palpitating picture of it. Ah! if I only could—I want to see" (and here he passed his hand through his hair as if trying to remember) "something of the relations of labour and capital, of the extraordinary development of industrial machinery, of the new and intricate developments of corporation finance, and in particular I want to try

to analyse—no one has ever done it yet—the men who guide and drive it all. I want to set down the psychology of the multimillionaire ! "

He paused. The girl stood irresolute. She was thinking (apparently, for if not, why stand there ?).

" Perhaps," she faltered, " I could help you."

" You ! "

" Yes, I might." She hesitated. " I—I—come from America."

" You ! " said de Vere in astonishment. " With a face and voice like yours ! It is impossible ! "

The boldness of the compliment held her speechless for a moment.

" I do," she said ; " my people lived just outside of Cohoes."

" They couldn't have," he said passionately.

" I shouldn't speak to you like this," the girl went on, " but it's because I feel from what you have said that you know and love America. And I think I can help you."

" You mean," he said, divining her idea, " that you can help me to meet a multimillionaire ? "

" Yes," she answered, still hesitating.

" You know one ? "

" Yes," still hesitating, " I know *one*."

She seemed about to say more, her lips had already opened, when suddenly the dull raucous blast of the foghorn (they used a raucous one on this ship on purpose) cut the night air. Wet fog rolled in about them, wetting everything.

The girl shivered.

" I must go," she said ; " good night."

For a moment de Vere was about to detain her. The wild thought leaped to his mind to ask her her name or at least her mother's. With a powerful effort he checked himself.

" Good night," he said.

She was gone.

Limits of space forbid the insertion of the whole of the next chapter. Its opening contains one of the most vivid word-pictures of the inside of an American customs house ever

pictured in words. From the customs wharf de Vere is driven in a taxi to the Belmont. Here he engages a room; here, too, he sleeps; here also, though cautiously at first, he eats. All this is so admirably described that only those who have driven in a taxi to an hotel and slept there can hope to appreciate it.

Limits of space also forbid our describing in full de Vere's vain quest in New York of the beautiful creature whom he had met on the steamer and whom he had lost from sight in the aigrette department of the customs house. A thousand times he cursed his folly in not having asked her name.

Meanwhile no word comes from her, till suddenly, mysteriously, unexpectedly, on the fourth day a note is handed to de Vere by the Third Assistant Head Waiter of the Belmont. It is addressed in a lady's hand. He tears it open. It contains only the written words, "*Call on Mr. J. Superman Overgold. He is a multimillionaire. He expects you.*"

To leap into a taxi (from the third story of the Belmont) was the work of a moment. To drive to the office of Mr. Overgold was less. The portion of the novel which follows is perhaps the most notable part of it. It is this part of the chapter which the *Hibbert Journal* declares to be the best piece of psychological analysis that appears in any novel of the season. We reproduce it here.

CHAPTER II

. . . . .

"EXACTLY, exactly," said de Vere, writing rapidly in his note-book as he sat in one of the deep leather armchairs of the luxurious office of Mr. Overgold. "So you sometimes feel as if the whole thing were not worth while."

"I do," said Mr. Overgold. "I can't help asking myself what it all means. Is life, after all, merely a series of immaterial phenomena, self-developing and based solely on sensation and reaction, or is it something else?"

He paused for a moment to sign a cheque for $10,000 and throw it out of the window, and then went on, speaking still with the terse brevity of a man of business.

"Is sensation everywhere or is there perception too? On what grounds, if any, may the hypothesis of a self-explanatory consciousness be rejected? In how far are we warranted in supposing that innate ideas are inconsistent with pure materialism?"

De Vere listened, fascinated. Fortunately for himself, he was a University man, fresh from the examination halls of his Alma Mater. He was able to respond at once.

"I think," he said modestly, "I grasp your thought. You mean—to what extent are we prepared to endorse Hegel's dictum of immaterial evolution?"

"Exactly," said Mr. Overgold. "How far, if at all, do we substantiate the Kantian hypothesis of the transcendental?"

"Precisely," said de Vere eagerly. "And for what reasons [naming them] must we reject Spencer's theory of the unknowable?"

"Entirely so," continued Mr. Overgold. "And why, if at all, does Bergsonian illusionism differ from pure nothingness?"

They both paused.

Mr. Overgold had risen. There was great weariness in his manner.

"It saddens one, does it not?" he said.

He had picked up a bundle of Panama two per cent. gold bonds and was looking at them in contempt.

"The emptiness of it all!" he muttered. He extended the bonds to de Vere.

"Do you want them," he said, "or shall I throw them away?"

"Give them to me," said de Vere quietly; "they are not worth the throwing."

"No, no," said Mr. Overgold, speaking half to himself, as he replaced the bonds in his desk. "It is a burden that I must carry alone. I have no right to ask any one to share it. But come," he continued, "I fear I am sadly lacking in the duties of international hospitality. I am forgetting what I owe to Anglo-American courtesy. I am neglecting the new obligations of our common Indo-Chinese policy. My motor is at the door. Pray let me take you to my house to lunch."

De Vere assented readily, telephoned to the Belmont not to keep lunch waiting for him, and in a moment was speeding up the magnificent Riverside Drive towards Mr. Overgold's home. On the way Mr. Overgold pointed out various objects of interest,—Grant's tomb, Lincoln's tomb, Edgar Allan Poe's grave, the ticket office of the New York Subway, and various other points of historic importance.

On arriving at the house, de Vere was ushered up a flight of broad marble steps to a hall fitted on every side with almost priceless *objets d'art* and others, ushered to the cloakroom and out of it, butlered into the lunch-room and footmanned to a chair.

As they entered, a lady already seated at the table turned to meet them.

One glance was enough—plenty.

It was she—the object of de Vere's impassioned quest. A rich lunch-gown was girdled about her with a twelve-o'clock band of pearls.

She reached out her hand, smiling.

"Dorothea," said the multimillionaire, "this is Mr. de Vere. Mr. de Vere—my wife."

Of the next chapter we need only say that the *Blue Review* (Adults Only) declares it to be the most daring and yet conscientious handling of the sex-problem ever attempted and done. The fact that the *Congregational Times* declares that this chapter will undermine the whole foundations of English Society and let it fall, we pass over: we hold certificates in writing from a great number of the Anglican clergy, to the effect that they have carefully read the entire novel and see nothing in it.

CHAPTER III

. . . . . .

They stood looking at one another.

"So you didn't know," she murmured.

In a flash de Vere realised that she hadn't known that he didn't know and knew now that he knew.

He found no words.

The situation was a tense one. Nothing but the woman's innate tact could save it. Dorothea Overgold rose to it with the dignity of a queen.

She turned to her husband.

"Take your soup over to the window," she said, "and eat it there."

The millionaire took his soup to the window and sat beneath a little palm tree, eating it.

"You didn't know," she repeated.

"No," said de Vere; "how could I?"

"And yet," she went on, "you loved me, although you didn't know that I was married?"

"Yes," answered de Vere simply. "I loved you, in spite of it."

"How splendid!" she said.

There was a moment's silence. Mr. Overgold had returned to the table, the empty plate in his hand. His wife turned to him again with the same unfailing tact.

"Take your asparagus to the billiard-room," she said, "and eat it there."

"Does he know, too?" asked de Vere.

"Mr. Overgold?" she said carelessly. "I suppose he does. *Eh après, mon ami?*"

French? Another mystery! Where and how had she learned it? de Vere asked himself. Not in France, certainly.

"I fear that you are very young, *amico mio*," Dorothea went on carelessly. "After all, what is there wrong in it, *piccolo pochito*? To a man's mind perhaps—but to a woman, love is love."

She beckoned to the butler.

"Take Mr. Overgold a cutlet to the music-room," she said, "and give him his gorgonzola on the inkstand in the library."

"And now," she went on, in that caressing way which seemed so natural to her, "don't let us think about it any more! After all, what is is, isn't it?"

"I suppose it is," said de Vere, half convinced in spite of himself.

"Or at any rate," said Dorothea, "nothing can at the same time both be and not be. But come," she broke off, gaily dipping a macaroon in a glass of *crème de menthe* and offering it to him with a pretty gesture of camaraderie, "don't let's be gloomy any more. I want to take you with me to the matinée."

"Is he coming?" asked de Vere, pointing at Mr. Overgold's empty chair.

"Silly boy," laughed Dorothea. "Of course John is coming. You surely don't want to buy the tickets yourself."

. . . . .

The days that followed brought a strange new life to de Vere.

Dorothea was ever at his side. At the theatre, at the polo ground, in the park, everywhere they were together. And with them was Mr. Overgold.

The three were always together. At times at the theatre Dorothea and de Vere would sit downstairs and Mr. Overgold in the gallery; at other times, de Vere and Mr. Overgold would sit in the gallery and Dorothea downstairs; at times one of them would sit in Row A, another in Row B, and a third in Row C; at other times two would sit in Row B and one in Row C; at the opera, at times, one of the three would sit listening, the others talking, at other times two listening and one talking, and at other times three talking and none listening.

Thus the three formed together one of the most perplexing, maddening triangles that ever disturbed the society of the metropolis.

. . . .

The *dénouement* was bound to come.

It came.

It was late at night.

De Vere was standing beside Dorothea in the brilliantly lighted hall of the Grand Palaver Hotel, where they had had supper. Mr. Overgold was busy for a moment at the cashier's desk.

"Dorothea," de Vere whispered passionately, "I want to take you away, away from all this. I want you."

She turned and looked him full in the face. Then she put her hand in his, smiling bravely.

"I will come," she said.

"Listen," he went on, "the *Gloritania* sails for England to-morrow at midnight. I have everything ready. Will you come?"

"Yes," she answered, "I will"; and then passionately, "Dearest, I will follow you to England, to Liverpool, to the end of the earth."

She paused in thought a moment and then added.

"Come to the house just before midnight. William, the second chauffeur (he is devoted to me), shall be at the door with the third car. The fourth footman will bring my things—I can rely on him; the fifth housemaid can have them all ready—she would never betray me. I will have the undergardener—the sixth—waiting at the iron gate to let you in; he would die rather than fail me."

She paused again—then she went on.

"There is only one thing, dearest, that I want to ask. It is not much. I hardly think you would refuse it at such an hour. May I bring my husband with me?"

De Vere's face blanched.

"Must you?" he said.

"I think I must," said Dorothea. "You don't know how I've grown to value, to lean upon, him. At times I have felt as if I always wanted him to be near me; I like to feel wherever I am—at the play, at a restaurant, anywhere—that I can reach out and touch him. I know," she continued, "that it's only a wild fancy and that others would laugh at it, but you can understand, can you not—*carino caruso mio*? And think, darling, in our new life, how busy he, too, will be—making money for all of us—in a new money market. It's just wonderful how he does it."

A great light of renunciation lit up de Vere's face.

"Bring him," he said.

"I knew that you would say that," she murmured, "and listen, *pochito* pocket-edition, may I ask one thing more, one weeny thing? William, the second chauffeur—I think he would fade away if I were gone—may I bring him, too? Yes! O my darling, how can I repay you? And the second footman, and the third housemaid—if I were gone I fear that none of——"

"Bring them all," said de Vere half bitterly; "we will all elope together."

And as he spoke Mr. Overgold sauntered over from the cashier's desk, his open purse still in his hand, and joined them. There was a dreamy look upon his face.

"I wonder," he murmured, "whether personality survives or whether it, too, when up against the irresistible, dissolves and resolves itself into a series of negative reactions?"

De Vere's empty heart echoed the words.

Then they passed out and the night swallowed them up.

CHAPTER IV

At a little before midnight on the next night, two motors filled with muffled human beings might have been perceived, or seen, moving noiselessly from Riverside Drive to the steamer wharf where lay the *Gloritania*.

A night of intense darkness enveloped the Hudson. Outside the inside of the dockside a dense fog wrapped the statue of Liberty. Beside the steamer customs officers and deportation officials moved silently to and fro in long black cloaks, carrying little deportation lanterns in their hands.

To these Mr. Overgold presented in silence his deportation certificates, granting his party permission to leave the United States under the imbecility clause of the Interstate Commerce Act.

No objection was raised.

A few moments later the huge steamer was slipping away in the darkness.

On its deck a little group of people, standing beside a pile of first-class cabin luggage, directed a last sad look through their

heavy black disguise at the rapidly vanishing shore which they could not see.

De Vere, who stood in the midst of them, clasping their hands, thus stood and gazed his last at America.

"Spoof!" he said.

(We admit that this final panorama, weird in its midnight mystery, and filling the mind of the reader with a sense of something like awe, is only appended to *Spoof* in order to coax him to read our forthcoming sequel, *Spiff!*)

P. R. Chalmers

TUPPENNY BLUES

(A TALE FOR PHILATELISTS)

YOU'VE heard of the Mauritius Blue,[1]
Worth fifteen hundred pounds or so,
But never of my great-aunt Prue—
Well, here's a story of the two,
In half-a-dozen rounds or so.

I'd tell you of my great-aunt Prue
When she was Prudence Bevan,
Her cheeks were pink, her eyes were blue
In 1847;

A year of philatelic fame,
For—lest my point should miss you—
In 1847 came
The first Mauritius issue.

O famous plates! O famous hues!
They stand among their fellows:
Five hundred celebrated Blues,
Five hundred noble Yellows!

To-day but one or two exist
In honoured *far niente*
To gladden the philatelist
And please the cognoscenti.

[1] The blue *2d.* postage-stamp of Mauritius, issued 1847.

To pretty Prue who lived at Bath
  And reverenced her betters,
One morning up the garden path
  The postman brought the letters.

She ran to meet him at the door
  As sweet as " young Virginia " ;
See, two are hers—the rest are for
  Her guardian, Miss Lavinia.

The first her school-friend Belle is from,
  Who says her frock's *delicious* ;
The other comes from Cousin Tom,
  Just then in *the Mauritius.*

Now Tom, it cannot be denied—
  Of sentiment the token—
Before he sailed had looked and sighed,
  But hadn't really spoken.

So, see her now—her cheeks the lamps
  Of maidenly sensation,
Exclaiming at his postage-stamps
  In coy procrastination.

" What *pretty* blue !—the *dear* Queen's head !
  Why, *any one* might crave them !
How *kind* of Tom ! " (I'm sure she said)
  " I certainly shall *save* them."

She breaks the wafer, flushed with hope—
  The wafer—for the fact is,
In her young day the envelope
  Was not a general practice.

Then " *Oh,*" she cries, " the *wretch*—he's wed
  A *sugar-planter's* daughter,"—
And would have fallen like the dead
  Had not Miss Livvy caught her.

With smelling-salts they bring her to;
They bathe her pretty forehead;
They tell her: "*Burn* the letter, Prue"—
And "Tom was always *horrid*."

She burns the page of Cousin Tom
And eke the stamps upon it;
And then, to take her mind therefrom,
Goes out to buy a bonnet.

That month her Cousin Philip tried;
The next beheld their marriage!
She bore him sons, and lived and died
And always kept a carriage.

. . . . .

And now, whene'er I hear my friends
Their grand relations naming,
Who burnt their candles at both ends,
And lost a fortune gaming;

Or saying how *Sir George* went strong
(Their tales are long and many),
And sold the Romneys for a song
And didn't leave a penny:

Then—as I say—when thus they do,—
Though pride is meretricious—
I always counter with Aunt Prue
Who burnt the Blue Mauritius!

F. Anstey

HIS FIRST "EXEAT"

BEING MORE OF "WHAT THE MOON SAW"

(WITH DUE APOLOGIES TO THE SHADE OF ANDERSEN THE INIMITABLE)

"YESTERDAY afternoon," the Moon told me, "I looked down upon the chief street of a small country town. It is a broad sloping street; the pavement on each side is raised, and separated from the road by a belt of turf and a row of shady lime-trees.

"At the west end of the street, almost in the middle of it, stands the Town-hall; on its steep, brown-tiled roof there is a little columned cupola, in the base of which is the clock.

"The shadows of the trees had already stretched nearly across the road, and the clock-hands were pointing to half-past six, when I saw a motor-car approach and come to a standstill opposite the building. In the car was a family party; the father was driving, with his elder daughter by his side. She had bright brown hair, neatly tied behind with a big bow. The mother and the younger daughter were in the seat behind, and between them sat a small boy in a white flannel shirt and knicker-bockers.

"I had seen him before, and I knew that he was at school in the town, and that this was his first term there. Yesterday was a half-holiday, and his 'people' had evidently driven over and got leave for him to come out for a ride with them.

"Now the afternoon had come to an end, and it was time to part; so he kissed his younger sister and his mother, after which he got out, and mounted the step by the front seat to

kiss his father. Next he kissed the brown-haired sister across the steering-wheel, and stood aside, raising his school-cap, as the car started. He watched it turn the corner, his mother and sisters waving their hands to him up to the moment it disappeared, and then he walked, rather slowly, back to his school, which was half-way up the hill.

"I can often read the thoughts of you mortals," said the Moon, "and I could read his quite clearly. 'It had been ripping to see them all again'—that is what he was thinking—'and he had had a simply topping afternoon. And yet, he wasn't quite sure, now, that he wouldn't almost rather they hadn't come! It was a good thing he had managed to be set down at the Town-hall and not at the school-gate, which he had been afraid, during most of the drive back, was what he was in for. Luckily, he had got his own way over *that*—which was something to the good. And, after all, it was only five weeks and three days to the "hols" now!' So, by the time he reached the school-gate, he was not feeling so very down-hearted, though even then it was an effort to go in. For, as he had expected, the boys had just come in from cricket, and several of the bigger ones were lingering by the railings at the entrance. However, they took no notice of him as he shyly stole past them, and I saw him standing in a deserted part of the playground, looking very lonely and forlorn.

"Suddenly he started, and his face flushed. He had just heard a motor-horn in the distance, and its note was strangely like one he knew very well. It sounded again—nearer this time—and now there could be no doubt about it. It *was* his father's car! Why it should return he could not imagine at first, but soon he realised that he must have left his coat in the car, and his people had discovered it and were bringing it back.

"He should have been delighted at the thought of seeing them again so unexpectedly, if only for a minute or two—but all he felt was dismay. He couldn't go out and say good-bye all over again, and kiss and be kissed, before all those fellows—it would be too ghastly! Now they would be sure to 'rot' him—which was just what he had been hoping to have escaped!

No, he could *not* stand it. He glanced round, and, finding that no one was looking at him, ran like a rabbit towards a shed. He had just time to get inside it before the car pulled up, throbbing and panting, at the school-gate. From his hiding-place he could see nothing, though he was near enough to hear everything that was said. . . .

" Yes, that was his mother's voice asking for him, and Thompson Major's replying that he did not know where he was. The fugitive shook with terror as he heard her actually charging Thompson Major, the Captain of the First Eleven, to let her son have the coat as soon as he saw him !

" He did not venture to show himself till long after the hum of the departing car had died away once more and all danger of being discovered was over ; but when he encountered the Captain of the First Eleven, he was agreeably surprised to find that that august personage not only deigned to return the coat himself, but was ' jolly decent ' to him about it !

" He would have been even more surprised if he had been told, as *I* could have told him, that his brown-haired sister was in any way connected with this amazing condescension, for he has never considered her as more than passably good-looking, or, although she is some years older than he is, as at all likely to impress a ' blood ' like Thompson Major as more than a ' mere kid.'

" But then he did not see what I saw," said the Moon, " and, in my opinion, his sister is quite pretty enough to ensure him the protection of Thompson Major for at least the rest of the term.

" I feel certain that my small boy had not been crying at all while he was in hiding—I suppose he had too many other things to think of. Later on I saw him lying awake in his bed by the window in his dormitory, and I am not so sure that *then* —but the others were all asleep, and, even if he *did* cry a little, there was no one but myself to notice it," said the Moon.

Pryse Lockhart Gordon

LADY HAMILTON AND LORD NELSON

[The following account of the great hero and his goddess is taken from a book published in 1830 under the title *Personal Memoirs; or, Reminiscences of Men and Manners at Home and Abroad, during the last half century.* The author, who was born in 1762, was an officer in the army, in a regiment raised by the Duke of Gordon. In 1797 he accompanied his friend Lord Montgomery on a long European tour, and they arrived in Palermo in 1799 shortly after Sir William and Lady Hamilton, with Nelson, had convoyed the Queen of Naples thither, after the sack of her city.

Marriage making him independent, Gordon became a dilettante and traveller and met many interesting persons. Among his friends was Porson, of whom he gives a vivid account. As a picture collector, Gordon was once offered Titian's "Bacchus and Ariadne," now in the National Gallery, for £700, but could raise only £600.

Here follows Gordon's account of Nelson and the Hamiltons in Palermo in 1799:]

THE Bay of Palermo yields but little in beauty to that of Naples; the bold headlands and lofty back-ground to the city are extremely picturesque.

We entered the Mole without coming to anchor, and proceeded with Captain Hope to our minister's house, and were presented to Sir W. Hamilton and Lord Nelson, who lived with him. Our introduction to the fascinating Emma Lady Hamilton was an affair of more ceremony, and got up with considerable stage effect. When we had sat a few minutes, and had given all our details of Naples, which we thought were received with great *sang-froid*, the Cavaliere retired, but shortly returned, entering by a *porte battante*, and on his arm or rather his shoulder was leaning the interesting Melpomene, her raven tresses floating round her

expansive form and full bosom. What a model for a Roman matron! but alas! poor Emma was indisposed, "dying," she said, "of chagrin for the loss of her beloved Naples;" yet the roses on her cheek prevailed over the lilies, and gave hopes that her grief would not prove mortal.

The ceremony of introduction being over, she rehearsed in a subdued tone a *mélange* of Lancashire and Italian, detailing the catalogue of her miseries, her hopes, and her fears, with lamentations about the dear queen, the loss of her own charming Palazzo and its precious contents, which had fallen into the hands of the vile republicans. But here we offered some consolation, by assuring her Ladyship that every article of the ambassador's property had been safely embarked in an English transport, and would be despatched in a few days. All this we afterwards learned she knew, as the vessel had actually arrived. During this interesting conversation the lady discovered that she was Lord Montgomery's *cousin*, and appealing to her husband said, "A'nt us, Sir William?" His Lordship made his bows and acknowledgements, and we were invited to dinner, her Ladyship regretting "that her small house could not accommodate him;" (it was a palace of fifty rooms at least.)

The hero of the Nile now came forth from a corner where he had been writing, and cross-examined us about Naples, insinuating, we thought rather impertinently, that we had been guilty of high imprudence in remaining there so long. Lord M—— replied, that he considered himself highly fortunate in having been permitted to remain so long, and that if he could have secured a safe retreat, he would not have stirred till the French were at the gates, adding that both he and his friend had been highly gratified, lamenting only that so fine a city should have been left to its fate, and that patriotism there seemed to be extinct. These remarks did not seem at all to accord with the sentiments of the gallant admiral, and I observed some very significant glances pass between him and his fair friend.

After a few trifling queries about the burning of the gunboats, Lord Nelson said to me—"Pray, Sir, have you heard of

the battle of the Nile?" I thought this a strange question, and could not help imagining for a moment that the great hero meant to quiz me; but I replied with equal gravity, "that I had heard of *two* battles *of the Nile*, and that I had perhaps done more honour to them and to his lordship than any other individual as far as wine could testify loyalty, for I had quaffed at least half a dozen bottles on the occasions," adding, "that having been at Pisa in July, an account had been sent from Leghorn of a great victory at the mouth of the Nile, which was celebrated by a party of Englishmen, when it was discovered that the news was a fabrication, and I got a head-ache for nothing, but this did not deter me from assisting at the celebration of the glorious victory, when it did happen, a few weeks after."

I know not what his Lordship thought of this speech, but he replied, "*That* battle, Sir, was the most extraordinary one that was ever fought, and it is *unique*, Sir, for three reasons; first, for its having been fought at night; secondly, for its having been fought at anchor; and thirdly, for its having been gained by an admiral with one arm." To each of these reasons I made a profound bow; but had the speech been made *after* dinner, I should have imagined the hero had imbibed an extra dose of champagne. It is very singular, however, that he made the exact same harangue to the Lord Mayor of London the following year, when a sword and the freedom of the city were presented to him.

. . . . . .

Shortly after our arrival we dined with our ambassador. In the evening a stranger was announced as having arrived, bearing a despatch from the Emperor Paul of Russia: the messenger was a Turk. Lady H. with her usual tact, recommended Lord Nelson, for whom the despatch was destined, to clothe himself in his pelisse and aigrette to receive the Turk: this was done in a moment. The party moved to a *salle de reception*. The folding doors were thrown open, and the Mussulman entered. The moment he caught a glance of his Lordship's costume, the slave was prostrate on the earth, making the grand salaam. This was the scene her Ladyship had anticipated, and it was got up with stage effect.

The credentials being delivered were found to contain an autograph letter from Paul, complimenting the hero on the glories he had achieved; and in testimony of his Majesty's regard, the Emperor of all the Russias desired his acceptance of a gold snuff-box, on which was the imperial portrait. The letter (in French) was read to the assembly, and the present exhibited. It was superb, of chaste gold; the portrait was set with large brilliants, a gift worthy of an Emperor. Lady H——, by means of a Greek interpreter belonging to the embassy, flirted with the Turk, a coarse savage monster, and he was invited to dinner the following day to drink the health of the Emperor. It was considered strange that a Mahometan should have been charged with an embassy from a Christian prince, but the interpreter explained that the credentials had been sent to Corfu; but no Russian vessel being there, the governor had employed the captain of a frigate of a Turkish squadron in the bay, under orders to repair to Messina, to fulfil the Emperor's commands. The ship, it seems, had been left at that port, and the captain came over land to Palermo, as he had been directed.

The only memorable event which occurred at the minister's entertainment, was this warrior getting drunk with rum, which does not come under the prohibition of the prophet. The monster, who had the post of honour at her Ladyship's side, entertained her through the interpretation of the Greek with an account of his exploits; among others, that of his having lately fallen in with a French transport, conveying invalids and wounded soldiers from Egypt, whom he had brought on board his frigate; but provisions and water having run short, he found it necessary to get rid of his prisoners, and amused himself by putting them to death. "With this weapon," said he, in his vile jargon, and drawing his shabola, "I cut off the heads of twenty French prisoners in one day! Look, there is their blood remaining on it!" The speech being translated, her Ladyship's eye beamed with delight, and she said, "Oh let me see the sword that did the glorious deed!" It was presented to her; she took it into her fair hand covered with rings, and looking at the encrusted Jacobin blood, kissed it and handed it to the hero of the Nile!

Had I not been an eye-witness to this disgraceful act, I would not have ventured to relate it.

Mrs. C——s L——e, the beautiful and amiable wife of our consul-general, was sitting *vis-à-vis* to the Turk, and was so horrified at the scene (being near her accouchement,) that she fainted and was taken out of the room. Her ladyship said it was a piece of affectation, and made no efforts to assist her guest; the truth is, she was jealous of her beauty, and insinuated that, being a sister of the late Lord E. F., she must necessarily be a Jacobin. N.B. She wore green ribbons. The toad-eaters applauded, but many groaned and cried "shame" loud enough to reach the ears of the admiral, who turned pale, hung his head, and seemed ashamed. Lord M. got up, and left the room, and I speedily followed. Poor Nelson was to be pitied—never was man so mystified and deluded!

. . . . .

A royal fête was given in the public gardens in honour of the anniversary of the young Prince's birth. The illuminations and fire-works were splendid, but the chief attraction of the evening was a temple, containing a group of portraits admirably modelled in wax, and as large as life, representing Admiral Lord Nelson, Duke of Bronte, and Sir William and Lady Hamilton. These figures were dressed in their actual garments; the hero of the Nile in the coat with which he fought the battle; Sir William in the Windsor uniform; and his spouse in a robe of royal purple, on which was embroidered in letters of gold an inch long, the names of the ten captains who achieved the victory, the favourites having the post of honour in front. The temple erected for the occasion was dedicated to Victory. In the middle stood the admiral; on his right the lady holding a trumpet and representing Fame; on the left the ambassador in the character of Mentor, though many thought he was the God of War; be this as it may, a more *classical* groupe cannot be imagined! A wreath of laurel was on the admiral's head; at a signal agreed upon, (a flight of rockets,) the little Leopold, in the costume of a midshipman, advanced from the royal groupe to the temple, and with a grace and modesty becoming his years, raised from the brow of the

waxen admiral the wreath of laurel, and placed it on that of the living one!

At this interesting moment a band of music struck up with our national air "God save the King," and a thousand voices chaunted an ode written by an English poetess, Miss Knight, adapted to the music. A chorus filled the air far and wide, having been previously drilled by the King's *Maestro di Cappella.*

I was in hopes that this melodramatic farce would have closed here, but the crowned hero with his satellites continued to march about the gardens for three hours after the royal party had quitted them, followed and gazed at by the multitude. *Jesu Maria!* (as an Italian would say,) how lamentable to see the greatest sea captain submit to and glory in being made such a puppet!

[In his later memoirs Mr. Gordon returns to the subject of Lady Hamilton, after her death. Thus:]

One of Lady Hamilton's chief attractions was her hair, with which it is well known she played wonderful tricks in her attitudes. A clever German artist, M. Tichbein, then residing at Naples, made spirited sketches of her in the various characters she assumed, and which she was fond of displaying at her *soirées.* I have more than once witnessed these exhibitions. On one occasion, being desirous to astonish a gentleman who had just arrived, and had not heard of her ladyship's attitudinal celebrity, she dropped from her chair on the carpet, when sitting at table after dinner. The comb which fastened her superabundant locks had been removed, (like Cæsar she had fallen gracefully,) and nothing could have been more classical or imposing than this prostrate position. Sir William started up to open a little of the curtain in order to admit the proper light, while the stranger flew to the sideboard for water, with which he plentifully sprinkled the fainting dame, before he discovered that it was a *scena* (and not a fit as he thought) which had been got up.—"You have spoiled, my good friend," said the knight, "one of the most perfect attitudes that Emma ever executed—how unlucky!"

Lady H. could bear no rival near her, and flattery was as neces-

sary to her as the air she breathed. She had also the art of flattering others with great success; and there can be no doubt but she persuaded poor Nelson that she was actually in love with him, not as a Mars but as an Adonis! Queen Caroline knowing this, made her the tool of all the projects she wished to accomplish by means of the British admiral; being fully aware of the influence that such a woman, devoted to her by bribes and flattery, would have over such a man. It was this vile conspiracy that destroyed poor Nelson's private character. He confessed his infatuation to more than one intimate friend, and it is not surprising that he had not the courage to extricate himself from his trammels.

As to Sir William, he was a perfect Neapolitan both in mind and manners. The little consequence he retained as an ambassador was derived from his wife's intrigues; but as long as he could keep his situation, draw his salary, and collect vases, he cared little about politics; he left the management of them to her ladyship. He trafficked in the arts, and his hotel was a broker's shop. . . .

I cannot help remarking that twelve years after this *fête* [described above] which I had witnessed, I accidentally met Lady H. in the Park at Greenwich. It was on St. George's day, the anniversary of her birth as well as of my own. "She had come down," she said, "with her dear little Horatia Thompson Nelson," (the supposed daughter of Lord Nelson,) a pretty lively child of ten years old. The party on this occasion consisted of an elderly vulgar-looking dame and half-a-dozen children, the companions of her *élève*, to whom she was giving a little *fête* at the Ship. When I put her in mind of that which I had witnessed at Palermo, she was greatly affected; and I believe on this occasion there was no acting. She felt how times were changed with her in so few years; she was humiliated to find that I, who had beheld her in all her glory, surrounded by royalty, and grandees kissing her hand, should now see an old woman, divested of all her charms, and reduced to comparative poverty, attended by a miserable *gouvernante* and a few children, travelling in a shabby *remise* with a solitary footman. She tried to conceal

the chagrin which a few remarks of mine had occasioned: she dropped her veil, and I observed her eyes filled with tears. "Alas," said she, "these were happy days, never again to return!" . . .

Age and circumstances had made sad ravages and changes in her formerly splendid countenance; but the eye, though less brilliant, was still beautiful, and that fascinating mouth from which sculptors had modelled, yet retained its expression. The lovely hair which was wont to hang over her polished forehead was now tucked under a huge cap, or perhaps it had become grey—be that as it may, it no longer served as an ornament. Her dress, once so gay and gaudy, was now sombre and shabby, and the only part of it that denoted a person above the middle rank, was a Cachmere shawl, and I knew it to be one I had seen her formerly wear; it was a remarkable one, and had been presented to Lord Nelson by the Grand Signior, along with the *pelisse* and *aigrette*. The admiral had given her this shawl, and often have I seen her kiss it, and hear her boast "that she had wrapped the queen's feet in it on their passage from Naples."

R. L. Stevenson

NEW LETTERS

I

The three following letters are now for the first time published, by kind permission of their owners and Mr. Lloyd Osbourne.

The first, to an early friend, was written when Stevenson was twenty-three, after a breakdown in health.

DOVER,
November 5th.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I came down to-day in company with a man who regaled me with the chronicle of accidents that had befallen him—he had broken in his time seven ribs, a collar-bone, a leg and an arm, and seemed not one penny the worse. The country was very lovely; one grand spread of russet and green; and to the Medway, which accompanied us for a little way, I quite lost my heart. To-night it blows most lamentably, and the noise of both wind and sea dins in my ears. I fear I shall not have a pleasant crossing.

This is the first day I have not seen you for ten days—"a faggot's blaze"—but I am still warm and shall keep warm too, although I am now (to use Jim's pathetic phrase) "out in the night."

I have an article in my head which I think might do for the *Portfolio*. You see you always inspire me.

PARIS,
November 6th.

We had a very bad passage; there was weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth all round me; the table in the centre

of the cabin was overset and an avalanche of bags, camp-stools, coats, etc., was sent down to leeward, one heavy lurch, to the great discomfiture of many. I am very tired, or I should have a great deal to say to you. As it is, I must just say what I *would* have said. I would have said a lot about the *smell* of foreign towns; which you will be able to supply; and a lot also, about effects of poplars which seem to me sometimes quite perfect. Especially rivers winding hither and thither in a discreet, diplomatic way and always between poplar colonnades. There were two English ladies in the carriage with me, going to Italy under the guidance of a man; all three stolid, obtuse, and unemotional. It did make me angry to think that a third of the money that will be spent in hawking these dull creatures through all that is sunny and beautiful would suffice to take you, with all your eager sensibilities and quick nerves.

It is not nine yet and I am overcome with sleep. To-night I arrived tired in a great city after nightfall; and I did the same on the Saturday before last; only how different were the two arrivals! To-night I was going a stranger among strangers; and on Saturday I was coming home.

I went out and dined at a café and then smoked a pipe up and down the streets; it was cold a little, but I could not resist the lights and the pleasant sound of the new language in my ears. McMahon's address is pasted up everywhere and political pictures fill the windows.

7th.

I sleep ten and lie in bed twelve hours consistently. I have had breakfast and have just crawled upstairs to get a rest. My room is on the sixth floor; although they make it out to be the fourth only by dint of calling one the *entresol* and not calling another anything at all.

I just stop to remark upon French dogs, which seem to me more French considerably than the French people. They are charmingly national. I saw two to-day reading McMahon's message, or pretending to read it, with patriotic concern.

I am half in doubt whether I shall go on to-day or not; but

I shall go if I am able. Paris is cold, and wearies me a little besides. And then I do wish to get settled and have my books and papers all about me once more, and be able to write to you in comfort instead of shivering up here among the sparrows. I am very like a sparrow on the house-top, by the bye; by a peculiar disposition of the neighbouring roof, the idea that one is in the open air is almost irresistibly forced upon one in this numero dix-ter, and there is nothing in the temperature to belie it.

I am growing gradually more rested while I gossip with you. I wish to go to the Poste Restante, just in *case*, and thence to some good booksellers to inquire about a lot of books on the French Calvinists which are necessary to my little covenanting game. If I only were not so tired I would write such lots; but my spine is beginning to crawl. So good-bye.

R. L. Stevenson

The next letter, to the same friend, belongs to the spring of 1875, and was written in Edinburgh. Stevenson came to think less highly of the prose poems to which he refers, and one only was ever printed.

Thursday.

I have been in town, and had a fine time with toothache; I am writing such nice things—at least so I fancy. I have no time for elaborate letters; and yet my heart is much with you, as you will see when you come to read what I have written.

Friday.

Since Tuesday evening, I have written six prose poems, and I shall very likely do a seventh before night. At this rate I shall have a book in no time. What about my exam.? O God knows, to-morrow for that—to-morrow for that. I do believe some of them are good. There's one about Sudbury watermeadows which is simply a little masterpiece. I desire to repeat that, in case you might think I didn't mean it. I'm as cock a hoop as a man can be; and that, in spite of toothache which hangs round me and now and then makes a run in.

I have done: "The quiet waters by," that's Sudbury.

"In a Garden," that's—well, it's rather private. "A Summer night," that's about staying out a whole night making plans in the streets of Edinburgh, Bob and I did it. "The Drunkard and the Sea," that's a wild thing that I'm pleased with. "The Lighthouse, No. 1: On the roof." I'm going to have another called "In the lightroom." Lastly "A Sermon by your leave"; but I don't know if they will give me leave. Of course they'll remind people of Baudelaire, but I think they're really quite unlike.

Saturday.

Not a moment—catch post—all well and jolly. Don't keep me too long, although after this sorry note anything fair—like Jingle in Pickwick—*Dieu vous bénisse.*

Sunday.

Interrupted. Wal, you can't get a letter till Tuesday. I had a nice time to-day, lying about the church outside in the sunshine, hearing the psalms and the stony solitary voice of the preacher. All the same, Sunday comes hard on one. The mind goes back of a Sunday; and repents. I hope you will like my prose poems; I hope you will like something of mine, anyway, I think there are some of the bits of letters I have written to you that might come in; a letter, for instance, I wrote last May or June about the green and daisies and great spring winds. Perhaps, too, a thing I sent last winter about the lamp in the chapel.

Ever yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

The next belongs to the winter of 1875–6 and is to the same friend.

I could not write yesterday, because, hosanna! I am hard at work. Last Friday a sudden spasm seized me and I sat down to "Fontainebleau" and yesterday I had finished the scroll; to-day I have copied out the first three pages, print pages, I mean. So that's a great improvement. I am just set on work, and yet I don't give up exercise, but keep at it like a man. As

long as this fit lasts, life is easy enough. I shall have the whole paper ready for press by the end of the week, or I shall be much astonished.

Figure to yourself, I wrote a review of Lord —— for *Vanity Fair*—a few pages of scurrility that I wrote laughing in an hour or two—and I got—guess!—I got five pounds for it and the price of the book! That was jolly, wasn't it? Long live *Vanity Fair*!

Keep up your heart. (You see how the vane has turned round since last I wrote. I am actually a comforter.) It is quite true that there is no meaning in life, and no aim or end, no star as signpost in the whole sordid maze. But I have had good times in the course of the pilgrimage from nothing to nowhere; and so have you. If I could get to London to-day (as I wish I could), I feel sure I could make you have one more good time, I feel so good and jolly. So the fight's not lost, after all; and I am not going to be all my life under the constellation of the black dog. O dear friend, I wish I could be with you a moment just to show you it's all right. I know it'll be all wrong a week hence or perhaps to-morrow. *Je m'en fiche!* What a pity this good hour should be wasted. However, even this letter may do you good, if it is only to remind you that to each and all the spirit of delight does sometimes come.

Ever your faithful friend,

R. L. S.

II

The first of the two letters which follow, to another friend, belongs to 1893. The passage about Barbara Grant concerns a remark in the letter to which this is a reply as to the writer's favourite heroine in Stevenson's stories.

There is no need to state that of the books upon which Stevenson says he was then engaged he did not live to finish any. *Weir of Hermiston* remains a torso; "Q" completed *St. Ives*. The other two were only fragments.

DEAR BARRIE,

I will not say anything about your hand, because my own is so damnable and apparently you have no Tenila to temper the wind to your correspondents. I will say nothing about your hand, I say, except that Henry James is easy, and James Payn a gentleman alongside of you, and the only person who writes worse is André Bourget. But not even friendship can prevail on me to palliate the besotted ambiguity of your last. It is like a beautiful letter I had the same mail from some (plainly) very nice American boys, out of which I could gather neither who wrote it nor where it was written. But even in that case I could gather what it was about. Not from yours. You *seem* in one paragraph to be clearly meditating a descent on Samoa ; and then in others, the beautiful seeming fades, vanishes with a melodious twang, and leaves us lamenting. The fault of obscurity is . . . and on vital subjects too ! . . .

Your genealogy is no doubt quite correct. "Dishart" was a great *trouvaille* ; it is a noble name. I did very well with Hoseason, Shuan and Riach, in the living Covenant. Shuan was Free Kirk Mecnister of North Berwick, in his day, which was noisy, meddling and revivalistic. Riach was in the Auld Kirk—Riach of Pencaitland, the full style of him, and I wished it could be supplied. I have another name in a projected tale, Blair of Balmile ; he was a genuine person, out in the '45. My own uncle has simply the finest name in the world, *Ramsay Traquair*. Beat that you cannot. I remember how much I adored Romeo the first time I saw it, on a sheet of characters (Skelts) 1 penny plain and 2*d.* coloured. . . .

I like Barbara the best, and so did David or very nearly ; but this was an infidelity—thish !

I am at (1) *The Justice Clerk* (or else *Weir of Hermiston*), about 50 pp. done ; (2) *The Young Chevalier*, about 30 pp. ; (3) *Heathercat* (the covenanting tale), about 50 pp. ; (4) *St. Ives : Adventures of a French Prisoner in England*, on p. 93 and shortly to appear. It is a mere story : to tickle gudgeons and make money for a harmless family. *The Justice Clerk* is, I fear, in the guttery rut. At least the heroine disgraces herself about

as free as anyone I've heard of, and the hero—but that's telling. Anyway it's meant to be best of them; that, or *Heathercat.* Would you call it *The Justice Clerk* or *Weir of Hermiston*? Perhaps the second is the best as the most exact. But the other is the more Scottish and so preferred by me.

The very entertaining letter which follows, describing analytically the Vailima household, was dictated to Mrs. Strong, Stevenson's stepdaughter, some eighteen months before his death, and is embellished by her with delightful red-ink drawings.

VAILIMA, SAMOA,
April 2nd or *3rd*, 1893.

MY DEAR BARRIE,

Here follows a catalogue of my menagerie:

R. L. S.
the Tame Celebrity.
Native name: *Tusi tala.*

Exceedingly lean, dark, rather ruddy—black eyes, crowfooted, beginning to be grizzled, general appearance of a blasted boy—or blighted youth—or to borrow Carlyle on De Quincey "Child that has been in Hell" . . . industrious, respectable and fatuously contented. Used to be very fond of talking about Art, don't talk about it any more. Is restrained by his family from talking about Origin of Polynesian Race. Really knows a good deal, but has lived so long with aforesaid family and foremast hands, that you might talk a week to him and never guess it. Friendly grocer in Sydney: "It has been a most agreeable surprise to meet you, Mr. Stevenson—I would never have guessed you were a literary man." Name in family, the Tame Celebrity. Cigarettes without intermission except when coughing. Hopelessly entangled in apron-strings. . . . Manners purple on an emergency, but liable to trances. Essentially the common old copy-book gentleman of commerce: if accused of cheating at cards, would feel bound to blow out his brains, little as he would like the job. Has been an invalid for ten years, but can boldly claim that you can't tell it on him. Given to explaining the universe—Scotch, sir, Scotch.

Fanny V. de G. Stevenson,
The Weird Woman,
Native name: *Tamaitai.*

This is what you will have to look out for, Mr. Barrie. . . . If you don't get on with her, it's a pity about your visit. She runs the show. Infinitely little, extraordinary wig of gray curls, handsome waxen face like Napoleon's, insane black eyes, boy's hands, tiny bare feet, a cigarette, wild blue native dress usually spotted with garden mould. In company manners presents the appearance of a little timid and precise old maid of the days of prunes and prism—you look for the reticule. Hellish energy; relieved by fortnights of entire hibernation. Doctors everybody, will doctor you, cannot be doctored herself. The living Partizan. Imaginary conversation after your visit: "I like Mr. Barrie. I don't like anybody else. I don't like anybody that don't like him. When he took me in to dinner he made the wittiest remark I ever heard. 'Don't you think,' he said, 'the old-fashioned way, etc.'" Is always either loathed or slavishly adored—indifference impossible.

Isobel Stewart Strong.
[*Your humble servant the Amanuensis.*
Native name, Teuila.]

Eyes enormous and parti-coloured, one-and-three-fifths brown, the other two-fifths golden.

Her long dark hair deep as her knees
And thrid with living silver seas.

Caricatures cleverly. Will arrange your hair and stick flowers about you till you curse. Meaning of her native name, The Adorner of the Ugly. Even a stiff six-foot-two English guest learned to kneel daily for his wreath, and the native boys go to her to have their ties put on. Runs me like a baby in a perambulator, sees I'm properly dressed, bought me silk socks and made me wear them, takes care of me when I am sick, and I don't know what she doesn't do for me when I'm well, from writing my books to trimming my nails. Has a growing

conviction that she is the author of my works, manages the house and the houseboys, who are very fond of her. Does all the hair-cutting of the family. Will cut yours, and doubtless object to the way you part it. Mine has been re-organized twice.

Lloyd Osbourne,
The Boy,
Native name, Loia.

Six foot, blond. Eyeglasses—British eyeglasses, too. Address varying from an elaborate civility to a freezing haughtiness. Decidedly witty. Has seen an enormous amount of the world for his age. Keeps nothing of youth but some of its intolerance. Unexpected soft streak for the forlorn. When he is good he is very very good, but when he is cross he is horrid. Of Dutch ancestry, and has spells known in the family as "Cold blasts from Holland." Exacting with the boys and yet they like him. Rather stiff with his equals, but apt to be very kindly with his inferiors—the only undemonstrative member of the family which otherwise wears its heart upon both sleeves; and except for my purple patches, the only mannered one. Has tried to learn fifteen instruments; has learned none, but is willing to try another to-morrow. *Signe particulier*; when he thrums or tootles on any of these instruments, or even turns a barrel-organ, he insists on public and sustained applause, and the strange thing is he doesn't seem to demand any for his stories. This trait is supposed to be unique.

Family Life.

The Boy, the Amanuensis, and the Tame Celebrity all play on instruments, and all ill. But you need not applaud the two last, little they'll reck if you'll let them play on. General character of life: a solid comfortable selfishness—guests preferred to be selfish also. N.B. No attention paid to guests. Clothing, you may find Loia in pajamas of which he has lost the string, soaked through and bedaubed with mud; or you may find him in white coat, tie and shirt, gaudyish sash,

and excruciatingly elegant riding breeches and boots; to say nothing of silver-mounted riding-whip and sapphire studs. Take me at the present moment, my costume consists of one flannel undershirt and one pair of striped pajama trousers all told—I beg your pardon, I forgot two rings and one cigarette, but you see the process is exhaustive. On the other hand you might find me in cords and fancy boots, with a velvet jacket chosen by the Amanuensis to the exact shade of harmony. My wife's usual dress will scarcely bear to be dwelt upon; but sir, when you told her the old-fashioned way, etc., she was in black velvet and duchesse lace, and I will trouble you for how she looked. The Amanuensis would require a pen more accomplished than mine. Her effects are various. Now she is to be seen in bare feet with toe-rings, and anon she is troubling the world with silk stockings, and these are sometimes blue. *Absit omen.* Her frocks and my wife's are all (to do the creatures justice) on the same pattern, the native pattern. But the Amanuensis calls in turn into the field every colour known under heaven; she goes through similar changing phases with her hair, of which there is so much that the combinations and permutations are practically inexhaustible; and after each fresh make-up she appears among us for approval and weeps if it be withheld. Thus we go up, up, up, and thus we go down, down, down. And you can see for yourself it is a somewhat dressy spot, though not at all like Piccadilly.

Another thing you must be prepared for—and that is the arrival of strange old shell-back guests out of every quarter of the island world, their mouths full of oaths for which they will punctiliously apologise, their clothes unmistakably purchased in a trade room, each probably followed by a dusky bride. These you are to expect to see hailed with acclamations, and dragged in as though they were dukes and duchesses. For though we may be out of touch with "God knows what," we are determined to keep in touch with Appemama and the Marquesas.

By the bye, a passage in the above has nearly blown up this family. It was faithfully submitted to all concerned and ad-

attention can provide ; in many cases the launching into a business career is undertaken. Nothing that concerns children whose small bodies are afflicted is outside the thoughtfulness of the association ; no suitable appeal has yet been made to it in vain.

Ladies and gentlemen, you can transfer any sense of responsibility, and express the generosity you feel, by posting a cheque this very evening to the Secretary of the INVALID CHILDREN'S AID ASSOCIATION, Denison House, Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, S.W. I declare of my own knowledge that you will never have reason to begrudge a penny of the disbursement ; I do believe it will be counted to you—in the Stevenson phrase—for brightest righteousness.

W. PETT RIDGE

A Suggestion from Mr. Pett Ridge

By the amiability of Messrs. Methuen, I am allowed to interpose as many words as will go on a page and a half. I shall waste few of them on preliminaries.

Infants, and the authorities at Scotland Yard, are generally supposed to be the only people who show a proper curiosity in regard to their surroundings. But you and I are interested in most people, and well acquainted with several towns that are, in the main, bright, attractive, and jolly. Now and again, however, in walking about hard-up districts, we envy the deaf, and no longer pity the blind: for the blind cannot see the tears of the children, and the deaf cannot hear their cry. For these, when found crippled or in other ways physically distressed, the individual—knowing that few of us are so prosperous that we need not become the richer for their gratitude; not one so happy that he can dispense with the joy of giving help—the individual can score little or nothing off his own bat. It is a task demanding expert knowledge, capable treatment, and this is where my suggestion comes in.

For twenty-six years certain good people, forming an energetic and kindly association, have been working on behalf of invalid children. Youngsters, at one time allowed to grow up bent and maimed, with no other chance but to exploit their hurts and defects, are now tended with everything surgery, nursing, and general

mitted to be on the whole a faithful and unvarnished account; but after a series of painful discussions we have decided to recall the word "selfishness." Loia prefers the phrase "A 'Wuthering Heights' impatience"—you may take it at that.

And now, my dear fellow, I want to thank you very heartily for your last letter. . . . I am quite sure that I know you and quite sure that you know me. People mayn't be like their books, they *are* their books. All that we want to do now is to meet—again. Do try and bring this visit about before anything happens; and to show that my family are at one with me in the invitation, here follow the signatures of all.

Fanny V. de G. Stevenson
Isobel Strong
Lloyd Osbourne
Robert Louis Stevenson

Ernest Bramah

THE CHIEF EXAMINER

IN the reign of the Emperor Kong there lived at Ho Chow an official named Thang-li, whose degree was that of Chief Examiner of Literary Competitions for the district. He had an only daughter, Fa Fei, whose mind was so liberally stored with graceful accomplishments as to give rise to the saying that to be in her presence was more refreshing than to sit in a garden of perfumes listening to the wisdom of seven elderly philosophers, while her glossy floating hair, skin of crystal lustre, crescent nails, and feet smaller and more symmetrical than an opening lotus made her the most beautiful creature in all Ho Chow. Possessing no son, and maintaining an open contempt towards all his nearer relations, it had become a habit for Thang-li to converse with his daughter almost on terms of equality, so that she was not surprised on one occasion when, calling her into his presence, he graciously commanded her to express herself freely on whatever subject seemed most important in her mind.

"The Great Middle Kingdom in which we live is not only inhabited by the most enlightened, humane, and courteous-minded race, but is itself fittingly the central and most desirable point of the universe, surrounded by other less favoured countries peopled by races of pig-tailless men and large-footed women, all destitute of refined intelligence," replied Fa Fei modestly. "The sublime Emperor is of all persons the wisest, purest, and——"

"Undoubtedly," interrupted Thang-li. "These truths are of gem-like brilliance, and the ears of a patriotic subject can never be closed to the beauty and music of their ceaseless repetition.

Yet between father and daughter, in the security of an inner chamber, there not unnaturally arise topics of more engrossing interest. For example, now that you are of a marriageable age, have your eyes turned in the direction of any particular suitor ? "

" Oh, thrice-venerated sire ! " exclaimed Fa Fei, looking vainly round for some suitable object behind which to conceal her honourable confusion ; " should the thoughts of a maiden dwell definitely on a matter of such delicate consequence ? "

" They should not," replied her father, " but, as they invariably do, the speculation is one outside our immediate concern. Nor, as it is your invariable custom to ascend upon the outside roof at a certain hour of the morning, is it reasonable to assume that you are ignorant of the movements of the two young men who daily contrive to linger before this in no way attractive residence without any justifiable pretext."

" My father is all-seeing," replied Fa Fei in a commendable spirit of dutiful acquiescence, and also because it seemed useless to deny the circumstance.

" It is unnecessary," said Thang-li. " Surrounded, as he is, by a retinue of eleven female attendants, it is enough to be all-hearing. But which of the two has impressed you in the more favourable light ? "

" How can the inclinations of an obedient daughter affect the matter ? " said Fa Fei evasively. " Unless, O most indulgent, it is your amiable intention to permit me to follow the inspiration of my own unfettered choice ? "

" Assuredly," replied the benevolent Thang-li. " Provided, of course, that the choice referred to should by no evil mischance run in a contrary direction to my own maturer judgment."

" Yet if such an eventuality did haply arise ? " persisted Fa Fei.

" None but the irredeemably foolish spend their time in discussing the probable sensation of being struck by a thunderbolt," said Thang-li more coldly. " From this day forth, also, be doubly guarded in the undeviating balance of your attitude. Restrain the swallow-like flights of your admittedly brilliant

eyes, and control the movements of your expressive fan within the narrowest bounds of necessity. This person's position between the two is one of exceptional delicacy, and he has by no means yet decided which to favour."

"In such a case," inquired Fa Fei, caressing his pig-tail persuasively, "how does a wise man act, and by what manner of omens is he influenced in his decision?"

"In such a case," replied Thang-li, "a very wise man does not act; but, maintaining an impassive countenance, he awaits the unrolling of events until he sees what must inevitably take place. It is thus that his reputation for wisdom is built up."

"Furthermore," said Fa Fei hopefully, "the ultimate pronouncement rests with the guarding deities?"

"Unquestionably," agreed Thang-li. "Yet, by a venerable custom, the esteem of the maiden's parents is the detail to which the suitors usually apply themselves with the greatest diligence."

. . . . .

Of the two persons thus referred to by Thang-li, one, Tsin Lung, lived beneath the sign of the Righteous Ink-brush. By hereditary right Tsin Lung followed the profession of copying out the more difficult Classics in minute characters upon parchments so small that an entire library could be concealed among the folds of a garment, in this painstaking way enabling many persons who might otherwise have failed at the public examinations and been driven to spend an idle and perhaps even dissolute life, to pass, with honourable distinction to themselves and wide-spread credit to his resourceful system. One gratified candidate, indeed, had compared his triumphal passage through the many grades of the competition with the luxurious ease of being carried in a sedan-chair, and from that time Tsin Lung himself was jestingly referred to as a "sedan-chair."

It might reasonably be thought that a person enjoying this enviable position would maintain a loyal pride in the venerable traditions of his house, and suffer the requirements of his craft to become the four walls of his ambition. Alas! Tsin Lung must certainly have been born under the influence of a very evil planet, for the literary quality of his profession did not

entice his imagination at all, and his sole and frequently expressed desire was to become a pirate. Nothing but the necessity of obtaining a large sum of money, with which to purchase a formidable junk and to procure the services of a band of capable and blood-thirsty outlaws, bound him to Ho Chow, unless, perchance, it might be the presence there of Fa Fei, after he had once cast his piratical eye upon her overwhelming beauty.

The other of the two persons was Hien, a youth of studious desires and unassuming manner. His father had been the chief tax-collector of the Chun-ling mountains, beyond the town, and, although the exact nature of the tax and the reason for its extortion had become forgotten in the process of interminable ages, he himself never admitted any doubt of his duty to collect it from all who passed over the mountains, even though the disturbed state of the country made it impossible for him to transmit the proceeds to the capital. To those who uncharitably extended the envenomed tongue of suspicion towards the very existence of any Imperial tax, the father of Hien replied, with unshaken loyalty, that in such a case the sublime Emperor had been very treacherously served by his advisers, as the difficulty of the paths and the intricate nature of the passes rendered the spot peculiarly suitable for the purpose, and, as he was accompanied by a well-armed and somewhat impetuous band of followers, his arguments were invariably successful. When he Passed Beyond, Hien accepted the leadership, but solely out of a conscientious respect for his father's memory, for his heart was never really in the occupation. His time was almost wholly taken up in reading the higher Classics, and even before he had seen Fa Fei, his determination had been taken that when once he had succeeded in passing the examination for the second degree, and thereby become entitled to an inferior mandarinship, he would abandon his former life for ever. From this resolution the entreaties of his devoted followers could not shake him, and presently they ceased to argue, being reassured by the fact that, although Hien presented himself unfailingly for every examination, his name appeared at the foot of each successive list with unvarying frequency. It was at this period

that he first came under the ennobling spell of Fa Fei's influence, and from that time forth he redoubled his virtuous efforts.

After conversing with her father, as already related, Fa Fei spent the day in an unusually thoughtful spirit. As soon as it was dark she stepped out from the house, and, veiling her purpose under the pretext of gathering some herbs to complete a charm, she presently entered a grove of overhanging cedars where Hien had long been awaiting her footsteps.

"Rainbow of my prosaic existence!" he exclaimed, shaking hands with himself courteously, "have you yet carried out your bold suggestion?" and so acute was his anxiety for her reply that he continued to hold his hand unconsciously until Fa Fei turned away her face in very becoming confusion.

"Alas, O my dragon-hearted one," she replied at length, "I have indeed dared to read the scroll, but how shall this person's inelegant lips utter so detestable a truth?"

"It is already revealed," said Hien, striving to conceal from her his bitterness. "When the list of competitors at the last examination is publicly proclaimed to-morrow at the four gates of the city, the last name to be announced will again, and for the eleventh time, be that of the degraded Hien."

"Beloved!" exclaimed Fa Fei, resolved that, as she could not honourably deny that her Hien's name was again indeed the last one to appear, she would endeavour to lead his mind subtly away to the contemplation of more pleasurable thoughts; "it is as you have said, but, although your name is the last, it is by far the most dignified and romantic-sounding of all, nor is there another throughout the list which can be compared with it for the ornamental grace of its flowing curves."

"Nevertheless," replied Hien, in a violent access of self-contempt, "it is a name of abandoned omen and is destined only to reach the ears of posterity to embellish the proverb of scorn, 'The lame duck should avoid the ploughed field.' Can there—can there by no chance have been some hope-inspiring error?"

"Thus were the names inscribed on the parchment, which, after the public announcement, will be affixed to the Hall of

Ten Thousand Lustres," replied Fa Fei. "With her own unworthy eyes this incapable person beheld it."

"The name 'Hien' is in no way striking or profound," continued the one in question, endeavouring to speak as though the subject referred to some person standing at a considerable distance away. "Furthermore, so commonplace and devoid of character are its written outlines that it has very much the same appearance whichever way up it is looked at. . . . The possibility that, in your graceful confusion, you held the list in such a position that what appeared to be the end was in reality the beginning is remote in the extreme, yet. . . . ?"

In spite of an absorbing affection, Fa Fei could not disguise from herself that her feelings would have been more pleasantly arranged if her lover had been inspired to accept his position unquestioningly. "There is a detail, hitherto unrevealed, which disposes of all such amiable suggestions," she replied. "After the name referred to, some one in authority had inscribed the undeniable comment 'As usual.'"

"The omen is a most encouraging one," exclaimed Hien, throwing aside all his dejection. "Hitherto this person's untiring efforts had met with no official recognition whatever. It is now obvious that, far from being lost in the crowd, he is becoming an object of honourable interest to the examiners."

"One frequently hears it said, 'After being struck on the head with an axe it is a positive pleasure to be beaten about the body with a wooden club,'" said Fa Fei, "and the meaning of the formerly elusive proverb is now explained. Would it not be prudent to avail yourself at length of the admittedly outrageous Tsin Lung's services, so that this period of unworthy trial may be brought to a distinguished close?"

"It is said, 'Do not eat the fruit of the stricken branch,'" replied Hien, "and this person will never owe his success to one who is so detestable in his life and morals that, with every facility for a scholarly and contemplative existence, he freely announces his barbarous intention of becoming a pirate. Truly the Dragon of Justice does but sleep for a little time, and when

he awakens, all that will be left of the mercenary Tsin Lung and those who associate with him will scarcely be enough to fill an orange-skin."

"Doubtless it will be so," agreed Fa Fei, regretting, however, that Hien had not been content to prophesy a more limited act of vengeance, until, at least, her father had come to a definite decision regarding her own future. "Alas, though, the Book of Dynasties expressly says, 'The one-legged never stumble,' and Tsin Lung is so morally ill-balanced that the proverb may even apply to him."

"Do not fear," said Hien. "It is elsewhere written, 'Love and leprosy few escape,' and the spirit of Tsin Lung's destiny is perhaps even at this moment lurking unsuspected behind some secret place."

"If," exclaimed a familiar voice, "the secret place alluded to should chance to be a hollow cedar-tree of inadequate girth, the unfortunate spirit in question will have my concentrated sympathy."

"Just and magnanimous father!" exclaimed Fa Fei, thinking it more prudent not to recognise that he had learned of their meeting-place, and, concealing himself there, had awaited their coming, "when your absence was discovered a heaven-sent inspiration led me to this spot. Have I indeed been permitted here to find you?"

"Assuredly you have," replied Thang-li, who was equally desirous of concealing the real circumstances, although the difficulty of the position into which he had hastily and incautiously thrust his body on their approach compelled him to reveal himself. "The same inspiration led me to lose myself in this secluded spot, as being the one which you would inevitably search."

"Yet by what incredible perversity does it arise, venerable Thang-li, that a leisurely and philosophical stroll should result in a person of your dignified proportions occupying so unattractive a position?" said Hien, who appeared to be too ingenuous to suspect Thang-li's craft, in spite of a warning glance from Fa Fei's expressive eyes.

"The remark is a natural one, O estimable youth," replied Thang-li, doubtless smiling benevolently, although nothing of his person could be actually seen by Hien or Fa Fei, "but the recital is not devoid of humiliation. While peacefully studying the position of the heavens, this person happened to glance into the upper branches of a tree, and among them he beheld a bird's-nest of unusual size and richness—one that would promise to yield a dish of the rarest flavour. Lured on by the anticipation of so sumptuous a course, he rashly trusted his body to an unworthy branch, and the next moment, notwithstanding his unceasing protests to the protecting Powers, he was impetuously deposited within this hollow trunk."

"Not unreasonably is it said, 'A bird in the soup is better than an eagle's-nest in the dessert,'" exclaimed Hien. "The pursuit of a fair and lofty object is set about with hidden pitfalls to others beyond you, O noble Chief Examiner! By what nimble-witted act of adroitness is it now your enlightened purpose to extricate yourself?"

At this admittedly polite, but in no way inspiring, question, a silence of a very acute intensity seemed to fall on that part of the forest. The mild and inscrutable expression of Hien's face did not vary, but into Fa Fei's eyes there came an unexpected but not altogether disapproving radiance, while, without actually altering, the appearance of the tree encircling Thang-li's form undoubtedly conveyed the impression that the benevolent smile which might hitherto have been reasonably assumed to exist within had been abruptly withdrawn.

"Your meaning is perhaps well-intentioned, gracious Hien," said Thang-li at length; "but, as an offer of disinterested assistance, your words lack the gong-like clash of spontaneous enthusiasm. Nevertheless, if you will inconvenience yourself to the extent of climbing this not really difficult tree for a short distance you will be able to grasp some outlying portion of this one's body without any excessive fatigue."

"Mandarin," replied Hien, "to touch even the extremity of your incomparable pig-tail would be an honour repaying all earthly fatigue——"

"Do not hesitate to seize it then," said Thang-li, as Hien paused. "Yet, if this person may, without ostentation, continue the analogy, to grasp him firmly by the shoulders must confer a higher distinction, and would be even more agreeable to his own feelings."

"The proposal is a flattering one," continued Hien, "but my hands are bound down by the decree of the High Powers, for among the most inviolable of the edicts is it not written, 'Do the lame offer to carry the foot-sore; the blind to protect the one-eyed? Distrust the thread-bare person who from an upper back-room invites you to join him in an infallible process of enrichment; turn aside from the one devoid of pig-tail who says, 'Behold, a few drops daily at the hour of the morning sacrifice, and your virtuous head shall be again like a well-sown rice-field at the time of harvest'; and towards the passing stranger who offers you that mark of confidence which your friends withhold, close, and yet again open, a different eye. So shall you grow obese in wisdom.'"

"Alas," exclaimed Thang-li, "the inconveniences of living in an Empire where a person has to regulate the affairs of his every-day life by the sacred but antiquated proverbial wisdom of his remote ancestors are by no means trivial. Cannot this possibly mythical obstacle be flattened out by the amiable acceptance of a jar of sea-snails or some other seasonable delicacy, honourable Hien?"

"Nothing but a really well-grounded encouragement as regards Fa Fei can persuade this person to regard himself as anything but a solitary outcast," replied Hien, "and one paralysed in every useful impulse. Rather than abandon the opportunity of coming to such an arrangement he would almost be prepared to give up all idea of ever passing the examination for the second degree."

"By no means," exclaimed Thang-li hastily. "The sacrifice would be too excessive. Do not relinquish your sleuth-hound-like persistence, and success will doubtless reward your ultimate end."

"Can it really be," said Hien incredulously, "that my

contemptible efforts are a matter of sympathetic interest to one so high up in every way as the renowned Chief Examiner ? "

" They are, indeed," replied Thang-li, with that ingratiating candour which marked his whole existence. " Doubtless so prosaic a detail as the system of remuneration has never occupied your refined thoughts, but when it is understood that those in the position of this person are rewarded according to the success of the candidates you will begin to grasp the attitude."

" In that case," remarked Hien, with conscious humiliation, " nothing but a really sublime tolerance can have restrained you from upbraiding this obscure competitor as a thoroughly corrupt egg."

" On the contrary," replied Thang-li reassuringly, " I have long regarded you as the auriferous fowl itself. It is necessary to explain, perhaps, that the payment by result alluded to is not based on the number of successful candidates, but—much more reasonably, as all those have to be provided with lucrative appointments by the authorities—on the economy effected to the State by those whom I can conscientiously reject. Owing to the malignant Tsin Lung's sinister dexterity these form an ever decreasing band, so that you may be now fittingly deemed the chief prop of a virtuous but poverty-afflicted line. When you reflect that for the past eleven years you have thus really had the honour of providing the engaging Fa Fei with all the necessities of her very ornamental existence, you will see that you already possess practically all the advantages of matrimony. Nevertheless, if you will now bring our agreeable conversation to an end by releasing this inconsiderable person, he will consider the matter with the most indulgent sympathies."

" Forbear ! " exclaimed a harsh voice before Hien could reply, and from behind a tree, where he had doubtless heard Thang-li's impolite reference to himself, Tsin Lung stood forth. " How does it chance, O two-complexioned Chief Examiner, that, after weighing this one's definite proposals—even to the extent of demanding a certain proportion in advance—you are now engaged in holding out the same alluring hope to another ?

Assuredly, if your existence is so critically imperilled, this person and none other will release you and claim the reward."

"Turn your face backwards, imperious Tsin Lung," cried Hien. "These incapable hands alone shall have the overwhelming distinction of drawing forth the illustrious Thang-li."

"Do not get entangled among my advancing footsteps, immature one," contemptuously replied Tsin Lung, shaking the massive armour in which he was encased from head to foot. "It is inept for pigmies to stand before one who has every intention of becoming a rapacious pirate very shortly."

"The sedan-chair is certainly in need of new shafts," retorted Hien, and, drawing his sword with an expression of ferocity, he caused it to whistle around his head so loudly that a flock of migratory doves began to arrive under the impression that others of their tribe were calling them to assemble.

"Alas!" exclaimed Thang-li, in an accent of despair, "doubtless the wise Nung-yu was surrounded by disciples all eager that no other should succour him, when he remarked, 'A humble friend in the same village is better than sixteen influential brothers in the Royal Palace.' In all this illimitable Empire is there not room for one whose aspirations are bounded by the submerged walls of a predatory junk, and another whose occupation is limited to the upper passes of the Chun-ling mountains? Consider the poignant nature of this person's vain regrets if, by a couple of evilly directed blows, you succeeded at this inopportune moment in exterminating one another!"

"Do not fear, exalted Thang-li," cried Hien, who, being necessarily somewhat occupied in preparing himself against Tsin Lung's attack, failed to interpret these words as anything but a direct encouragement to his own cause. "Before the polluting hands of one who disdains the Classics shall be laid upon your sacred extremities this tenacious person will fix upon his antagonist with a serpent-like embrace, and, if necessary, suffer the spirits of both to Pass Upward in one breath." And to impress Tsin Lung with his resolution, he threw away his scabbard and picked it up again several times.

"Grow large in hope, worthy Chief Examiner," cried Tsin

Lung, who, from a like cause, was involved in a similar misapprehension. "Rather shall your imperishable bones adorn the interior of a hollow cedar-tree throughout all futurity than you shall suffer the indignity of being extricated by an earth-nurtured sleeve-snatcher." And, to intimidate Hien by the display, he continued to clash his open hand against his leg armour until the pain became intolerable.

"Honourable warriors!" implored Thang-li in so agonised a voice—and also because they were weary of the exercise—that Hien and Tsin Lung paused, "curb your bloodthirsty ambitions for a breathing-space and listen to what will probably be a Last Expression. Believe the passionate sincerity of this one's throat when he proclaims that there would be nothing repugnant to his very keenest susceptibilities if an escaping parricide, who was also guilty of rebellion, temple-robbing, book-burning, murder with indiscriminate violence, and the pollution of tombs, took him familiarly by the hand at this moment. What, therefore, would be his gratified feelings if two such nobly born subjects joined forces and drew him up dexterously by the body-cloth? Accept his definite assurance that without delay a specific pronouncement would be made respecting the bestowal of the one around whose jade-like personality this encounter has arisen."

"The proposal casts a reasonable shadow, gracious Hien," remarked Tsin Lung, turning towards the other with courteous deference. "Shall we bring a scene of irrational carnage to an end, and agree to regard the incomparable Thang-li's benevolent tongue as an outstretched olive-branch?"

"It is admittedly said, 'Even a bad coin has two sides,' and the alternative you suggest, O virtue-loving Tsin Lung, is both reputable and just," replied Hien pleasantly.

In this amiable spirit they extricated Thang-li and bore him to the ground.

. . . . .

At an appointed hour he received them with becoming ceremony, and, after a many-coursed repast, rose to fulfil the specific terms of his pledge.

"The Line of Thang," he remarked with inoffensive pride, "has for seven generations been identified with a high standard of literary achievement. Admittedly it is a very creditable thing to control the movements of an oft-time erratic vessel and to emerge triumphantly from a combat with every junk which you encounter, and it is no less worthy of esteem to gather round about one on the sterile slopes of the Chun-lings a devoted band of followers. Despite these virtues, however, neither occupation is marked by any appreciable literary flavour, and my word is, therefore, that both persons shall present themselves for the next examination, and when in due course the result is declared, the more successful shall be hailed as the chosen suitor. Lo, I have spoken into a sealed bottle, and my voice cannot vary."

Then replied Tsin Lung: "Truly, it is as it is said, astute Thang-li, though the encircling wall of a hollow cedar-tree, for example, might impart to the voice in question a less uncompromising ring of finality than it possesses when raised in a silk-lined chamber and surrounded by a band of armed retainers. Nevertheless, the pronouncement is one which appeals to this person's sense of justice, and the only improvement he can suggest is that the superfluous Hien should hasten that ceremony at which he will be an honoured guest by now signifying his intention of retiring from so certain a defeat. For by what expedient," he continued with arrogant persistence, "can you avert that end, O ill-destined Hien? Have you not burned joss-sticks to the deities, both good and bad, for eleven years unceasingly? Can you, as this person admittedly can, inscribe the Classics with such inimitable delicacy that an entire volume of the Book of Decorum, copied in his most painstaking style, may be safely carried about within a hollow tooth, a lengthy ode, traced on a shred of silk, wrapped undetectably around a single eyelash?"

"It is true that the one before you cannot bend his brush to such deceptive ends," replied Hien modestly. "One detail, however, has escaped your reckoning. Hitherto Hien has been opposed by a thousand, and against so many the

spirits of his ancestors have been able to afford him very little help. On this occasion he need regard one adversary alone. Giving those forces which he invokes clearly to understand that they need not concern themselves with any other, he will plainly intimate that, after so many sacrifices on his part, something of a really tangible affliction is required to overwhelm Tsin Lung. Whether this shall take the form of mental stagnation, bodily paralysis, demoniacal possession, derangement of the internal faculties, or being changed into one of the lower animals, it might be presumptuous on this one's part to stipulate; but, by invoking every accessible power and confining himself to this one petition, a very definite tragedy may be expected. Beware, O contumacious Lung, 'However high the tree, the shortest axe can reach its trunk.' "

. . . . .

As the time for the examination drew near, the streets of Ho Chow began to wear a fuller and more animated appearance both by day and night. Tsin Lung's outer hall was never clear of anxious suppliants all entreating him to supply them with minute and reliable copies of the passages which they found most difficult in the selected works; but, although his low and avaricious nature was incapable of rejecting this means of gain, he devoted his closest energies and his most inspired moments to his own personal copies, a set of books so ethereal that they floated on the air without support, and so cunningly devised in the blending of their colour as to be, in fact, quite invisible to any but his microscopic eyes. Hien, on the other hand, devoted himself solely to interesting the Powers against his rival's success by every variety of incentive, omen, sacrifice, imprecation, firework, inscribed curse, promise, threat, or combination of inducements. Through the crowded streets and by-ways of Ho Chow moved the imperturbable Thang-li, smiling benevolently on those whom he encountered, and encouraging each competitor, and especially Hien and Tsin Lung, with a cheerful proverb suited to the moment.

An outside cause had further contributed to make this period one of the most animated in the annals of Ho Chow, for not

only was the city, together with the rest of the imperishable Empire, celebrating a great and popular victory, but, as a direct consequence of that event, the sublime Emperor himself was holding his court at no great distance away. An armed and turbulent rabble of illiterate barbarians had suddenly appeared in the north, and, not giving a really sufficient indication of their purpose, had traitorously assaulted the capital. Had he followed the prompting of his own excessive magnanimity the charitable monarch would have refused to take any notice whatever of so puny and contemptible a foe; but so unmistakable became the wishes of the ever-victorious Army, that, yielding to their importunity, he placed himself at their head and resolutely led them backward. Had the opposing army been more intelligent this crafty move would certainly have enticed them on into the plains, where they would have fallen easy victims to the Imperial troops and all perished miserably. Owing to their low standard of reasoning, however, the mule-like invaders utterly failed to grasp the advantage which, as far as the appearance tended, they might reasonably be supposed to reap by an immediate pursuit. They remained incapably within the capital, slavishly increasing its defences, while the Ever-victorious lurked resourcefully in the neighbourhood of Ho Chow, satisfied that with so dull-witted an adversary they could, if the necessity arose, go still further.

Upon a certain day of the period thus indicated there arrived at the gate of the royal pavilion one having the appearance of an aged seer, who craved to be led into the Imperial Presence.

"Lo, Mightiest," said a slave, bearing in this message, "there stands at the outer gate one resembling an ancient philosopher, desiring to gladden his failing eyesight before he Passes Up with a brief vision of your illuminated countenance."

"The petition is natural, but inopportune," replied the agreeable monarch. "Let the worthy soothsayer be informed that, after an exceptionally fatiguing day, we are now snatching a few short hours of necessary repose, from which it would be unseemly to recall us."

"He received your gracious words with distended ears, and

then observed that it was for your All-wisdom to decide whether an inspired message which he had read among the stars was not of more consequence than even a refreshing sleep," reported the slave, returning.

" In that case," replied the Sublimest, " tell the persevering wizard that we have changed our minds, and are religiously engaged in worshipping our ancestors, so that it would be really sacrilegious to interrupt us."

" He kow-towed profoundly at the mere mention of your charitable occupation, and proceeded to depart, remarking that it would indeed be corrupt to disturb so meritorious an exercise with a scheme simply for your earthly enrichment," again reported the message-bearer.

" Restrain him ! " hastily exclaimed the broad-minded sovereign. " Give the venerable necromancer clearly to understand that we have worshipped them enough for one day. Doubtless the accommodating soothsayer has discovered some rare jewel which he is loyally bringing to embellish our crown."

" There are rarer jewels than those which can be pasted in a crown, Supreme Head," said the stranger, entering unperceived behind the attending slave. He bore the external marks of an infirm magician, while his face was hidden in a cloth to mark the imposition of a solemn vow. " With what apter simile," he continued, " can this person describe an imperishable set of verses which he heard this morning falling from the lips of a wandering musician like a seven-roped cable of pearls pouring into a silver bucket ? The striking and original title was, ' Concerning Spring,' and, although the snow lay deep at the time, several bystanders agreed that an azalea-bush, within hearing, came into blossom at the eighty-seventh verse."

" We have heard of the poem to which you refer with so just a sense of balance," said the impartial monarch encouragingly. (Though, not to create a two-sided impression, it may be freely stated that he himself was the author of the inspired composition.) " Which part, in your mature judgment, reflected the highest genius and maintained the most perfectly matched analogy ? "

" It is aptly said, ' When it is dark the sun no longer shines, but who shall forget the colours of the rainbow ? ' " replied the astrologer evasively. " How is it possible to suspend topaz in one cup of the balance and weigh it against amethyst in the other ; or who, in a single language, can compare the tranquillizing grace of a maiden with the invigorating pleasure of witnessing a well-contested rat-fight ? "

" Your insight is clear and unbiassed," said the gracious sovereign. " But, however entrancing it may be to wander unchecked through a garden of bright images, are we not enticing your mind from another subject of almost equal importance ? "

" There is yet another detail, it is true," admitted the sage ; " but, regarding its comparative importance, a thoroughly loyal subject may be permitted to amend the remark of a certain wise emperor of a former dynasty : ' Any person in the city can discover a score of gold-mines, if necessary, but One only could possibly have written " Concerning Spring." ' "

" The arts may indeed be regarded as lost," acquiesced the magnanimous Head, " with the exception of a solitary meteor here and there. Yet, in the trivial matter of mere earthly enrichment—— ? "

" Truly," agreed the other. " There is, then, a whisper in the province that the floor of the Imperial treasury is almost visible."

" The rumour, as usual, exaggerates the facts grossly," replied the Greatest. " The floor of the Imperial treasury is quite visible."

" Yet on the first day of the next moon the not inconsiderable revenue contributed by those who present themselves for the examinations will flow in ? "

" And, by an effete and unworthy custom, almost immediately flow out again to reward the efforts of the successful," replied the Wearer of the Yellow, in an accent of refined bitterness. " On other occasions it is possible to assist the over-worked treasurer with a large and glutinous hand, but from time immemorial the claims of the competitors have been inviolable."

" Yet if, by a heaven-sent chance, none, or very few, reached the necessary standard of excellence—— ? "

"Such a chance, whether proceeding from the Upper Air or the Other Parts, would be equally welcome to a very hard-lined Ruler," replied the one who thus described himself.

"Then listen, O Kong-hi, of the imperishable dynasty of Sung," said the stranger. "Thus was it laid upon me in the form of a spontaneous dream. For seven centuries the Book of the Observances has been the unvarying Classic of the examinations, because during that period it has never been surpassed. Yet, as the Empire has admittedly existed from all time, and as it would be impious not to agree that the immortal System is equally antique, it is reasonable to suppose that the Book of the Observances displaced an earlier and inferior work, and is destined in the cycle of time to be itself laid aside for a still greater."

"The inference is self-evident," admitted the Emperor uneasily, "but the logical development is one which this diffident monarch hesitates to commit to spoken words."

"It is not a matter for words, but for a stroke of the Vermilion Pencil," replied the other in a tone of inspired authority. "Across the faint and puny effusions of the past this person sees written in very large and obliterating strokes the words, 'Concerning Spring.' Where else can be found so novel a conception, combined with so unique a way of carrying it out? What other poem contains so many thoughts which one instinctively remembers as having heard before, so many involved allusions that baffle the imagination of the keenest, and so much sound in so many words? With the possible exception of Ming-hu's masterpiece, 'The Empty Coffin,' what other work so skilfully conveys the impression of being taken down further than one can ever again come up, and then suddenly upraised beyond any possible descent? Where else can be found so complete a defiance of all that has hitherto been deemed essential, and, to insert a final wedge, what other poem is half so long?"

"Your criticism is severe, but just," replied the sovereign, "except that part having reference to Ming-hu. Nevertheless, the atmosphere of the proposal, though reasonable, looms a degree stormily into a doubtful future. Can it be permissible even for——"

"Omnipotence!" exclaimed the seer.

"The title is well recalled," admitted the Emperor. "Yet, although unquestionably omnipotent, there must surely be some limits to our powers in dealing with so old-established a system as that of the examinations."

"Who can doubt a universal admission that the composer of 'Concerning Spring' is capable of doing anything?" was the profound reply. "Let the mandate be sent out—but, to an obvious end, let it be withheld until the eve of the competitions."

"The moment of hesitancy has faded; go forth in the certainty, esteemed," said the Emperor reassuringly. "You have carried your message with a discreet hand. Yet, before you go, if there is any particular mark of Imperial favour that we can show—something of a special but necessarily honorary nature—do not set an iron screen between your ambition and the light of our favourable countenance."

"There is indeed such a signal reward," admitted the aged person, with an air of prepossessing diffidence. "A priceless copy of the immortal work. . . ."

"By all means," exclaimed the liberal-minded sovereign, with an expression of great relief. "Take three or four in case any of your fascinating relations have large literary appetites. Or, still more conveniently arranged, here is an unopened package from the stall of those who send forth the printed leaves—'thirteen in the semblance of twelve,' as the quaint and harmonious phrase of their craft has it. Walk slowly, revered, and a thousand rainbows to guide your retiring footsteps."

Concerning the episode of this discreetly veiled personage the historians who have handed down the story of the imperishable affection of Hien and Fa Fei have maintained an illogical silence. Yet it is related that about the same time, as Hien was walking by the side of a bamboo forest of stunted growth, he was astonished by the maiden suddenly appearing before him from the direction of the royal camp. She was incomparably radiant, and had the appearance of being exceptionally well satisfied with herself. Commanding him that he should stand motion-

less with closed eyes, in order to ascertain what the presiding deities would allot him, she bound a somewhat weighty object about the end of his pig-tail, at the same time asking him in how short a period he could commit about nineteen thousand lines of atrociously ill-arranged verse to the tablets of his mind.

"Then do not suffer the rice to grow above your ankles," she continued, when Hien had modestly replied that six days, with good omens, should be sufficient; "but, retiring to your innermost chamber, bar the door and digest this scroll as though it contained the last expression of an eccentric and vastly rich relation," and with a laugh more musical than the rending of a piece of the finest Pong-he silk in the Grotto of Ten Thousand Echoes, she vanished.

It has been sympathetically remarked that, no matter how painstakingly a person may strive to lead Destiny along a carefully prepared path and towards a fit and thoroughly virtuous end, there is never lacking some inopportune creature to thrust his superfluous influence into an opposing balance. This naturally suggests the intolerable Tsin Lung, whose ghoulish tastes led him to seek the depths of that same glade on the following day. Walking with downcast eyes, after his degraded custom, he presently became aware of an object lying some distance from his way. To those who have already fathomed the real character of this repulsive person it will occasion no surprise to know that, urged on by the insatiable curiosity that was deeply grafted on to his avaricious nature, he turned aside to probe into a matter with which he had no possible concern, and at length succeeded in drawing a package from the thick bush, in which it had been hastily concealed. Finding that it contained twelve lengthy poems entitled "Concerning Spring," he greedily thrust one into his sleeve, and upon his return, with no other object than the prompting of an ill-regulated mind, he spent all the time that remained before the contest in learning it from end to end.

. . . . . .

There have been many remarkable scenes enacted in the great Examination Halls and in the narrow cells around, but it

can at once be definitely stated that nothing either before or since has approached the unanimous burst of frenzy that shook the dynasty of Sung, when, in the third year of his reign, the well-meaning, but too easily-led-aside Emperor Kong inopportunely sought to replace the sublime Classic then in use with a work that has since been recognized to be not only shallow but inept. At Ho Chow nine hundred and ninety-eight voices blended into one soul-benumbing cry of rage, having all the force and precision of a carefully drilled chorus, when the papers were opened, and, had not the candidates been securely barred within their solitary pens, a popular rising must certainly have taken place. There they remained for three days and nights until the clamour had subsided into a low but continuous hum, and they were too weak to carry out a combined effort.

Throughout this turmoil Hien and Tsin Lung each plied an unfaltering brush. It may here be advantageously stated that the former person was not really slow or obtuse, and his previous failures were occasioned solely by the inequality he strove under, in relying upon his memory alone when every other competitor, without exception, had provided himself with a concealed scrip. Tsin Lung also had a very retentive mind. The inevitable consequence was, therefore, that when the papers were collected, Hien and Tsin Lung had accomplished an identical number of correct lines, and no other person had made even an attempt.

In explaining Thang-li's subsequent behaviour it has been claimed by many that the strain of being compelled, in the exercise of his duty, to remain for three days and three nights in the middle of the Hall surrounded by that ferocious horde, all clamouring to reach him, and the contemplation of the immense sum which he would gain by so unparalleled a batch of rejections, contorted his faculties of discrimination and sapped the resources of his usually active mind. Whatever cause is accepted, it is agreed that, as soon as he returned to his house, he summoned Hien and Tsin Lung together, and, leaving them for a moment, presently returned leading Fa Fei by the hand. It is further agreed by all that these three persons noticed upon his face a

somewhat preoccupied expression, and on the one hand much has been made of the admitted fact that, as he spoke, he wandered round the room catching flies, an occupation eminently suited to his age and leisurely tastes, but, it may be confessed, not altogether well chosen at so ceremonious a moment.

" It has been said," he began at length, withdrawing his eyes reluctantly from an unusually large insect upon the ceiling, and addressing himself to the maiden, " that there are few situations in life that cannot be honourably settled and without loss of time either by suicide, a bag of gold, or by thrusting a despised antagonist over the edge of a precipice upon a dark night. This inoffensive person, however, has striven to arrive at the conclusion of a slight domestic arrangement both by passively waiting for the event to unroll itself, and, at a later period, by the offer of a definite omen. Both of the male persons concerned have applied themselves so tenaciously to the ordeal that the result, to this simple one's antique mind, savours overmuch of the questionable arts. The genial and light-witted Emperor appears to have put his foot into the embarrassment ineffectually ; and Destiny herself has every indication of being disinclined to settle so doubtful a point. As a last resort it now remains for you yourself to decide which of these strenuous and evenly-balanced suitors I may acclaim with ten thousand felicitations."

" In that case, venerated and commanding sire," replied Fa Fei simply, yet concealing her real regard behind the retiring mask of a modest indifference, " it shall be Hien, because his complexion goes the more prettily with my favourite heliotrope silk."

. . . . . .

When the results of the examination were announced it was at once assumed, by those with whom he had trafficked, that Tsin Lung had been guilty of the most degraded treachery. Understanding the dangers of his position, that person decided upon an immediate flight. Disguised as a wild-beast tamer, and leading several apparently ferocious creatures by a cord, he succeeded in making his way, undetected, through the crowds of competitors watching his house, and, hastily collecting his

wealth together, he set out towards the coast. But the evil spirits which had hitherto protected him now withdrew their aid. In the wildest passes of the Chun-lings Hien's band was celebrating their leader's unexpected success by a costly display of fireworks, varied with music and dancing. . . . So heavily did they tax Tsin Lung that, when he reached his destination, he was able only to purchase a small and dilapidated junk and to enlist the services of three thoroughly incompetent mercenaries. The vessels which he endeavoured to pursue stealthily in the hope of restoring his fortunes frequently sailed towards him under the impression that he was sinking and trying to attract their benevolent assistance. When his real intention was at length understood both he and his crew were invariably beaten about the head with clubs, so that, although he persevered until the three hired assassins rebelled, he never succeeded in committing a single act of piracy. Afterwards he gained a precarious livelihood by entering into conversation with strangers, and still later he stood upon a board and dived for small coins which the charitable threw into the water. In this pursuit he was one day overtaken by a voracious sea-monster and perished miserably.

The large-intentioned but never fully-accomplishing Emperor Kong reigned for yet another year, when he was deposed by the powerful League of the Three Brothers. To the end of his life he steadfastly persisted that the rebellion was insidiously fanned, if not actually carried out, by a secret confederacy of all the verse-makers of the Empire, who were distrustful of his superior powers. He spent the years of his exile in composing a poetical epitaph to be carved upon his tomb ; but his successor, the practical-minded Liu-yen, declined to sanction the expense of procuring so fabulous a supply of marble.

John Drinkwater

MAD TOM TATTERMAN

"OLD man, grey man, good man scavenger,
Bearing is it eighty years upon your crumpled back?
What is it you gather in the frosty weather,
Is there any treasure here to carry in your sack?"

. . . . .

"I've a million acres and a thousand head of cattle,
And a foaming river where the silver salmon leap;
But I've left fat valleys to dig in sullen alleys
Just because a twisted star rode by me in my sleep.

"I've a brain is dancing to an old forgotten music
Heard when all the world was just a crazy flight of dreams,
And don't you know I scatter in the dirt along the gutter
Seeds that little ladies nursed by Babylonian streams?

"Mad Tom Tatterman, that is how they call me.
Oh, they know so much, so much, all so neatly dressed;
I've a tale to tell you—come and listen, will you?—
One as ragged as the twigs that make a magpie's nest.

"Ragged, oh but very wise. You and this and that man,
All of you are making things that none of you would lack,
And so your eyes grow dusty, and so your limbs grow rusty—
But mad Tom Tatterman puts nothing in his sack.

"Nothing in my sack, sirs, but the Sea of Galilee
Was walked for mad Tom Tatterman, and when I go to sleep
They'll know that I have driven through the acres of broad heaven
Flocks are whiter than the flocks that all your shepherds keep."

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